Will Legal Pot End Appalachia's Biggest Cash Crop?
by Mark Lynn Ferguson

Cultivating Persons
by Loyal Jones

An Interview from Harlan County
featuring Robert Gipe

NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services East Tennessee State University

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Cultivating Appalachia

ARTICLES, PHOTOGRAPHS,
BOOK & MUSIC REVIEWS, POETRY, *and* MORE

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Hanni Muerdter, Stewardship & Conservation Planning Director for the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, removes invasive garlic mustard at Roan Mountain. Photo courtesy SAHC.

Photo courtesy SAHC.

Cultivating Appalachia

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STAFF

Managing Editor	Randy Sanders
Guest Poetry Editor	Don Johnson
Guest Book Editor	Eddy Pendarvis
Photo Editor	Charlie Warden
Graduate Assistant	O.J. Early
Center Director	Roberta Herrin

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NOW & THEN
THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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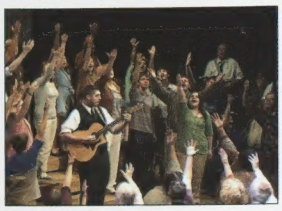
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cultivate

The Latin Root for *Cultivate* Means *Cherish*

My ninety year old neighbor's winter crop
Has sprouted, softening October's show
Of brittle reds and yellows. Through leaf drop
And frost these fields against the hill will glow
Green, percolating up through snow, that first
Leveler, to pool, as light unbends each stalk,
Until all sixty acres lie immersed
Again in green. Those winter days when I walk
His road, I'll picture him overalled in sun
Collecting wagonloads of windrowed stones,
A yearly harvest, labor never done,
A miracle of strength in those old bones.
His verdant fields illuminate dark days.
Those hard loaves stacked enlighten other ways.

- *Don Johnson*

cherish

This broadside was created in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services (CASS), East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee. CASS has made possible this collaborative effort between Anita M. DeAngelis of the Alliophile Press & Don Johnson. The typeface is Kennerly, and the paper is Hahnemuhle Bugra.

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We Cherish what we Cultivate and Cultivate what we Cherish

Roberta Herrin

During the 2004-2005 academic year, the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services celebrated its twentieth anniversary with a series of public programs, including a symposium on the Media and Appalachia. Rick Bragg was the keynote speaker, and there were sessions on the environment, healthcare, TVA, the War on Poverty, and the Appalachian Regional Commission, but the session that drew the most attention was called "Hollywood and Hokum."

Dee Davis, then president of the Center for Rural Strategies, debated Dub Cornett, filmmaker and documentarian, who had proposed a reality TV show modeled on *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Dub had sold the idea to CBS President Les Moonves and had even found an Appalachian family willing to move to Hollywood to star in the series, but public outrage—including invective from the floor of the US Senate—derailed the idea. At the symposium, Cornett made a strong case, arguing that he "never intended for the series to lampoon his own people. . . . Jed Clampett had integrity. The banker was an idiot." But Davis won the faceoff when he pointed out that, Cornett's intentions aside, Jethro Bodine was a twenty-six-year-old sixth-grader and in one episode he thought he had turned Granny into a chimpanzee. The Davis-Cornett debate got front-page coverage in the *Johnson City Press* (April 15, 2005) and stirred controversy. One man was outraged that the Center invited Cornett to campus, much less to participate in a symposium. To my mind, it was exactly what a Center of Excellence ought to do: cultivate dialogue about Appalachia.

Even more successful than the symposium was a series of film screenings from collections in the Archives of Appalachia. For example, "Historical Images from Elizabethton" was held in the town's old Bonnie Kate Theater. (In 2015, the theater was listed as one of the Tennessee Preservation Trust's Ten in Tennessee Endangered Properties.) The evening included footage of the 1929 North American Rayon Corporation strike and featured the Melton Barker film *The Kidnapper's Foil*, which Bradley Reeves had found in the Bonnie Kate some months earlier. On the night of the event, a line of people stretched through the lobby, outside the building, and down Sycamore Street. Refusing to turn anyone away, we held three consecutive showings. What we learned that evening informed our work for the next decade: Communities cherish historical and cultural programming that accurately reflects their identity.

Perhaps the most enduring marker of this twentieth-anniversary celebration was a broadside featuring Don Johnson's poem "The Latin Root for *Cultivate* Means *Cherish*." (Anita DeAngelis designed the broadside and printed it in her garage on her Vandercook press.) I will not parse Johnson's poem, though I do like to contemplate the juxtaposition of the green, sprouting "winter crop" and "hard loaves" stacked in windrows.

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At the time the broadside was printed, Center staff and faculty were engaged in hard work—the lengthy, tedious process of strategic planning. We labored over the usual mission, vision, commitments, and purposes. Someone suggested that an apt vision statement might be, "It's not your grandfather's Appalachia anymore," and I still think that would have sufficed, but we failed to grasp the two words that were right there in front of us—*cultivate* and *cherish*. Though we did not consciously adopt those two words as our mantra, they became imbedded in a work plan that guided the Center for the next decade—two words as inextricably linked to our mission as they are linked by etymology.

To carry out our plan—to meet our commitments and purposes—we cultivated all the assets of the Center: Regional Resources Institute, Reece Museum, Archives of Appalachia, *Now & Then* magazine, and—most importantly—the faculty and staff. Together we worked at the small tasks and the big tasks, but the one achievement I am most proud of is the curriculum: a minor and a bachelor of arts in bluegrass, old time, and country music; a graduate certificate and a master of arts in Appalachian studies; and an academic Department of Appalachian Studies to house them.

A decade has passed since that 2004-2005 celebration, and the Center celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2015 by hosting the annual Appalachian Studies Association Conference. The 900 attendees enjoyed more than 600 presentations in 150 sessions. Though the words *cultivate* and *cherish* appeared nowhere in any printed conference material, I believe that they were the implicit motivation for those 900 attendees.

Motivation comes in all sorts of guises. Consider, for example, a phone call I received from an *LA Times* reporter who wanted my help with a story on cock fighting in Cocke County, Tennessee. "The angle that I am taking for my story," he said, "is that Cocke County is the last little pocket of sin in the United States." *Really?* I thought. *The last little pocket of sin. Right here in Appalachia.*

As I look toward retirement on June 30 and look back at a dozen years of the Center's hard work, that phone call sticks in my memory. It affirms our mission and my 2004 decision to bring Dub Cornett to campus. It makes me glad for the controversy sparked by his debate with Dee Davis. After all, Hollywood is still promoting Appalachian hokum. Universities still need to cultivate and cherish their communities. When the need arises to write a vision statement, we should listen to our poets. ❖

Sorghum Syrup: A Sweet Taste of Independence

Fred Sauceman

Mark Guenther prefers cultivating sorghum cane with mules like Mattie. Photo courtesy the author.

Mattie and Ethel emerge from a barn that looks like a Gothic cathedral, ready for a day in the fields. Their home is on the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee, in a community called Muddy Pond.

Mattie and Ethel are guided by the gentle and knowing hands of their owner, Mark Guenther, clad in his trademark overalls. They head for the cane fields, these two loyal mules and Mark. Their agenda, on this day in early July, is to cultivate sweet sorghum cane, an ancient African grass.

The seeds—in this case a variety called Dale—were placed in the Tennessee earth in late May, for a 120-day growing season that will end in September, when the cane's true purpose is revealed. The Muddy Pond Sorghum company produces around 8,000 gallons of the sweet, amber-colored syrup every fall.

Mark and his wife Sherry live in a community of Mennonites, many of whom relocated to this spot on the Plateau in the early 1960s. The Guenthers and their neighbors find nobility through constant labor. They are largely self-sufficient, raising hogs that they turn into sausage, green beans that they season with sorghum, and cantaloupes that they sell at roadside markets. The arches and angles that frame the Guenthers' barn are Mark's handiwork. It took him four years to build that barn, and he did it unassisted.

At first, the cutting of the sorghum cane in September was machete work, dangerous and exhausting. Later, the juice was boiled in pans over an open fire.

Originally from Saskatchewan, Canada, Mark's father, John Guenther, had never even heard of sorghum until the move to Tennessee.

"Mom and Dad moved here in 1965," says Mark. "They had been married about a year and a half, and I'm the oldest one. I was born about a month after they moved here. The local people introduced them to sorghum and got them growing a little patch of cane, and they just made a few gallons."

Then in 1981, with eight children in the Guenther family, John decided to start his own mill. Six years later, steam supplanted the old wood-fire method. The Guenthers now cook down the juice with a steam boiler from an old locomotive.

Cane is no longer harvested with a machete. Mark and his family invented a machine that is taken out to the fields to cut the cane. It squeezes the juice into a large plastic tank, and then the juice is hauled to the mill.

In her book *Sorghum's Savor*, food writer Ronni Lundy calls Muddy Pond the "gold standard" in the world of sorghum.

Despite all the mechanical and technical improvements, Mark still cultivates the cane with mules. Mattie and Ethel, Mark says, are far more efficient and accurate than a modern tractor.

"I can control the speed with these mules, how fast they go," he tells me. "I can control the depth that it's cultivating and throw just the correct amount of dirt around these plants to cover up the weeds beside the plants and yet not cover up the plants. And it stirs the dirt.

"Most of all, I love doing it. There are those who are doing it with more modern machinery, and I'm not going to say they're not doing a good job, but I like doing this. It is slow, much slower. If you brought a tractor in here, you could go through this field ten times faster than I do, no sweat involved. But with the mules, I don't have the ground compaction that a tractor does, and I feel like by stirring the ground, I can see it every time that I cultivate—that it loosens the ground up, allows air to go in there, and you can just see the cane shoot up. Just in a couple of days, it grows tremendously."

Mattie and Ethel are well-traveled mules. To acquaint people with the old ways of grinding cane, Mark and Sherry load up their mules and take them every fall to Cades Cove in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and to Dollywood, where the animals trace circular ruts as they walk round and round the cane mill.

"You've got to get the cane before it freezes, and so September and October we start making here at the mill on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and of course the day before, the men, they'll go out in the field to press the cane, and that's a big job in itself. It takes several hours to get the juice squeezed out," says Sherry, who accompanies Mark and the mules on the road trips and offers up some education about their product.

Although one company they sell syrup to insists that they put the word "molasses" on their label, the Guenthers explain that sorghum and molasses are two different products.

"It takes about three and a half to four months to grow sorghum cane," Mark explains. "It takes a minimum of ten months to grow sugar cane. Therefore, this far north, it's too cool to grow sugar cane. You boil down both juices, but sorghum cane only makes sorghum syrup. There's not an economical way to process sugar out of sorghum juice.

"But sugar cane juice is boiled down, and at about the same thickness as sorghum is cooked to, the sugar separates and is removed by centrifugal force."

As Ronni Lundy puts it, in the making of sugar, molasses is the by-product, whereas with the growing of sorghum cane, the resulting syrup is "the point of everything."

Not only can sorghum cane be traced back to Africa, so can the word itself, deriving from an African word, *sorgo*. Although sorghum syrup has been consumed in America since the eighteenth century, the cane itself is a fairly recent import, coming from Western Europe to the United States in the early 1850s. At times when sugar became too expensive, sorghum became a primary sweetener. During the Civil War, a prison camp near Columbia, South Carolina, earned the nickname "Camp Sorghum," as cornmeal and sorghum syrup were rations for inmates.

While the making of sorghum syrup carries with it a sense of nostalgia, the practice doesn't seem to be dying away. Sorghum makers fill a convention center assembly hall every February for some continuing education at the annual gathering of the National Sweet Sorghum Producers and Processors Association. The NSSPPA enrolls members from over forty states.

"I am a charter member," says Danny Townsend, a fifth-generation sorghum maker from Jeffersonville, Kentucky. "I helped found the association, and I've served in every office—president, vice president, director. I've missed not one meeting. You see the crowd we have here today. People are interested in growing sorghum."

In a word, sorghum is hot. In a May 30, 2014, dispatch, the Associated Press described it as once "the province of grandmothers, a stodgy, household ingredient no one paid much mind." But "no more," the story asserted. A new generation of chefs in the South and beyond "appreciate its complexities and its provenance."

Chef John Fleer, owner of Rhubarb in Asheville, North Carolina, describes Muddy Pond sorghum as "elegant, winey, beautiful, and aromatic."

Chef Edward Lee, the Korean-American, Paris-educated Brooklynite who runs Louisville, Kentucky's, 610 Magnolia restaurant, includes sorghum as an ingredient throughout his book *Smoke & Pickles: Recipes and Stories from a New Southern Kitchen*.

"I love using sorghum syrup with smoky flavors; anything with burnt or caramelized flavors; anything over an open fire. It's the harmony," Lee writes.

Chef Jay Pierce, who has overseen kitchens at several North Carolina restaurants, adds, "I never did care for molasses. Blackstrap molasses included in things gives you an acrid flavor, and it's just intensely sweet. So I think it masks things. And when I first stumbled upon sorghum, the floral qualities, the subtleness, were, to me, incomparable."

Once prescribed by nineteenth-century doctors for iron-deficient patients, sorghum is re-emerging as a health food. Arland Johnson, a sorghum producer in Washington County, Tennessee, labels his syrup "Mother Nature in a Jug." It's all natural, with no additives.

A tablespoon of sorghum syrup contains roughly the same amount of

potassium as a whole banana, around 4.4 percent of what a healthy adult would need per day.

Dr. Michael Fleenor, an orthopedic surgeon practicing in Bristol, Virginia, began growing sorghum cane about six years ago, inspired by his relatives in Appomattox. At a farm auction, he bought an early-twentieth-century Avery mill to grind the cane and now produces enough syrup to cover his Cheerios every morning.

"Sorghum syrup is high in iron and potassium and many trace elements that people pay big money to use as diet supplements," he tells me, at the 2016 NSSPPA convention in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. "They all occur naturally in sorghum syrup. Sorghum is one of the purest products that can be grown on a farm to give high nutritional value. It's the original natural sweetener."

Mark Guenther checks the consistency of boiling sorghum juice during a demonstration at Cades Cove in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Photo courtesy the author.

Sorghum cane has a history of being relatively pest-resistant. But with the recent invasion of the sugarcane aphid, scientists are trying to develop a pesticide that can be used safely on sweet sorghum cane plants. The first detection of the aphid in Kentucky occurred in Fulton County in August of 2015 on grain sorghum, says field crop entomologist Dr. Ric Bessin of the University of Kentucky. The new pest quickly spread to other counties in the western and central regions of the state.

It takes about nine gallons of raw juice to make one gallon of syrup. This concentration of juice requires the testing of additional pesticide residue for the crop, since residues can increase as water is removed to make syrup.

There aren't many dishes in the Guenthers' kitchen that don't get a sorghum treatment of some sort. Mark's Special is a slice of bread smeared with sorghum and peanut butter and topped with a tomato, some mayonnaise, and salt and pepper. (Guitarist Chet Atkins was partial to a simpler version, with just sorghum and peanut butter.) Mark makes deer bologna with sorghum, and Sherry is known for her sorghum peanut brittle.

"It's especially good in baked beans," says Pete Guenther. "My brother Mark, he eats it in chili. In fact, I've about decided there's nothing that he won't eat it on. He puts it on pizza. Another way that it is really good—put a little bit in a microwave and just heat it until it gets good and warm and put it over the top of vanilla ice cream. It makes a great topping, almost like a caramel topping.

"Now there's times when I get a craving for it, and I'll just tip up the bottle and eat a couple of spoonsful of it straight."

In addition to floral tones and winey elegance, Lundy says there's another taste in that jug of sorghum syrup. It's the taste of independence.

"In mountain culture, there was a value for not being beholden to someone else," Lundy says in the ETSU-produced documentary *Sunlight Makes it Sweeter: A Story of Sorghum*. "And there was a value on making things for yourself, growing things for yourself, as opposed to going to buy something from the store or ending up in debt to somebody.

"Sorghum became something that you could plant yourself, you could grow it yourself, you could process it yourself. Sorghum has that taste of independence to me."

Making sorghum is a sweaty, laborious business. It requires constant attention from plowing to pouring. It demands a knowledge of the land and expertise in just about every engineering field imaginable. But for folks like Mark and Sherry Guenther, the sweet reward in September makes the endless cycle worthwhile. ❖

Fred Sauceman was editor of *Now & Then* from 2005 until 2015.

Away

Ron Smith

". . . echoes list to silence now where
gods told lies of old." –AE Housman

We were talking the usual bull, beers
in hand, the air light, the light like air,
the river full of light, full of fish,
Don said, and I had said something
about teaching and Jack chuckled, "Yeah,
that's what Emerson said, the first job
of the teacher is to inspire." That was
Aw Shucks Jack, with his mountain
accent deeper than that river, warmer
than the East Tennessee breeze.

He hadn't played half-rubber with us
that day, the pastime I hauled up from
Savannah to inflict in an apple orchard
on those middle-aged boys from Wisconsin
and Pennsylvania and by God Maine, but I
reminded Jack of the softball game from
a decade before when he had rounded third
like a runaway freight, belly ballooning
from the turn, and scared the catcher away
from the plate he hit with a slide that took
all our breaths away.

Broom handle (wood),
solid rubber ball (baseball size, cut down
the middle), items just about impossible to find
in 21st century Johnson City. And I think now
Jack did play, had the surest hands of the lot,
a born half-rubber catcher right there
where the river moves almost silently past
the orchard and all around the mountains lean in,
lean in as the light seeps away and Jack claps
his palms together, grins, and holds up
between thumb and forefinger half a ball,
and the boy from Maine's still untwisting
himself to see if he really is out.

in memory of Jack Higgs

Poet Laureate of Virginia and Writer-in-Residence at St. Christopher's School, Ron Smith is the author of the books *Running Again in Hollywood Cemetery*, *Moon Road*, *Its Ghostly Workshop*, and the forthcoming *The Humility of the Brutes*.

Custard Tree, Jelly Ditch

Jimmy Dean Smith

We were listening to Tammy's Greatest Hits or maybe it was The Tom Jones Fever Zone, to "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" or "Delilah." Daddy made good money in construction and cycled through pickups every two years, but once he settled on the music he liked he clung to it, hard. We were tearing down the back roads of the Piedmont somewhere in the neighborhood of Pauline and Glenn Springs with a Community Cash bag between my knees and a garden rake in the bed of the truck. Between songs, you could hear the rake rattle around.

Even on undivided two-lanes, Daddy kept the speedometer somewhere between Richard Petty and Chuck Yeager. If Chevrolet doesn't want you doing one-twenty, then why do the numbers go that high? That is nothing but common sense. But suddenly I noticed that the sunlight strobing between branches had slowed and feel our tires drifting off the pavement. Then we were still and Daddy turned the motor off, leaving poor Tammy halfway through her song, waitin' lonely in apartment number nine.

The rake was for knocking scuppernongs out of trees, and the grocery bag was for putting the scuppernongs in once I got them up off the ground. Because Daddy worked all week, he required that I do the stoop labor, tossing fist-sized bunches of bronze grapes into the sack just as soon as they fell glinting out of the sky. One time Daddy pulled down a branch with the rake, holding it with the tines, and I plucked bunches like we were in a proper vineyard. Then his grasp slipped and the branch catapulted the rake into the air where it hovered among scuppernongs before turning its teeth on us and grinning.

"Damn," said Daddy. "Run."

All our scuppernong days were Sundays and hot and when we got home Grandma bragged over the full grocery sack as if the golden grapes were real gold. Two or three times I asked what was the difference between a scuppernong and a muscadine, and each time I got a different, halting answer out of Daddy who, bless his heart, was trying his best to help me figure out the world without, of course, putting in enough effort to find out the real answers.

Some Sundays we grabbed a bag, long-sleeve shirts, and thick leather work gloves and others throughout the year just a bag, and those days we brought home blackberries or poke sallet or wild plums Daddy had spied growing on a little side road leading down back of the State School for the Deaf and Blind. One Sunday after Thanksgiving, we went out for a ride with Tammy and Tom and a bag and a shotgun. Daddy had been out driving Thanksgiving afternoon and spotted a place where, if someone else didn't get to it first, he'd show me how to shoot down mistletoe. We came back with a bag full of mistletoe, and Daddy teased Grandma she wouldn't finish any work that entire Christmastime with all the kissing she and Grandpa would be doing.

Jimmy Dean Smith, Sr., working for food in 1958. Photo courtesy the author.

The man talking trash to Grandma about work was by any scientifically valid metric a lazy man. Yes, he was a provider, but consider what I have been saying about his way to hunt 'n' gather. At exactly the moment that many Appalachians were foxfiring back to their roots, marching up the side of a mountain and 'sanging as in olden days, the way my daddy foraged the wild Piedmont looked a lot like cruising around, arm hanging out the window, looking at stuff and things till something tasty beckoned from just over yonder. If there had been ribeyes and pork chops in the ditch, he would have quit working entirely and just driven around all day looking for meat.

More than two hundred years earlier, William Byrd visited the rustic outskirts of Edenton, North Carolina, and

observed how its inhabitants ("indolent wretches") grazed their stock: "Both cattle and hogs ramble into the neighboring marshes and swamps, where they maintain themselves the whole winter long." Byrd appears to think that he is describing a character defect, but to me it seems more like the people of North Carolina, taking the Eden part of their town's name seriously, are rationally letting Nature itself do the heavy lifting. (Last week I read an unpublished manuscript by an Appalachian writer who wrote that the eighteenth-century practice of sending hogs out to forage was a sign not of idleness but of how generously the land gave of itself before capital beat down the mountains.) "To speak the truth," Byrd decided, "it is a thorough aversion to labor that makes people file off to North Carolina, where plenty and a warm sun confirm them in their disposition to laziness for their whole lives." I can imagine Daddy asking, "What is wrong with an aversion to labor?" and getting mad that Byrd specified North Carolina when the better part of South Carolina was also wallowing on its butt.

In the most infamous part of *History of the Dividing Line*, Byrd says that North Carolina "approaches nearer to the description of Lubberland than any other" place on earth. As his contemporaries would have known, he is referring to "Invitation to Lubberland," a ballad that had been around since the late seventeenth century. "In Lubberland, you'll live at ease,/With pleasant recreation," goes the ballad, and "There you may live a lazy life,/Free from all kind of labour." Also, "There you may live free from all care,/Like hogs set up a fat'ning," which borders on the libelous. Lubberland offers easy pleasures like "The streets are pav'd with pudding-pies" and "The rivers run with claret fine" and "The fountains flow with brandy." My favorite is this:

The captain says, "In every town,/Hot roasted pigs will meet ye,/ They in the streets run up and down,/ Still crying out, Come eat me."

Daddy must have dreamed the Lubberland dream, too, and the one where "Hot custards grows on ev'ry tree," and "Each ditch affords rich jellies," where you don't bother cultivating Appalachia because Appalachia has cultivated itself. What could be wrong with gratefully accepting what Nature offers?

Or what God offered. Byrd called North Carolina "the Land of Eden," referring to Governor Charles Eden, but Byrd knew exactly what he was doing (plenitude, good weather, no worries, no work: Eden). In the mid-1760s, the Reverend Charles Woodmason, a Low Country Episcopalian, came through the South Carolina backcountry, and doubled down on the pietistic approach to work. He talked about "Ignorant, mean, worthless, beggarly Irish Presbyterians, the Scum of the Earth, and Refuse of Mankind" and complained of "Subsisting on my Bisket and Rice Water and Musk Melons, Cucumbers, Green Apples and Peaches and such Trash." (I've seen kin swoon over a good cucumber.) He observed that my Presbyterian ancestors "delight in their present low, lazy, sluttish, heathenish, hellish Life, and seem not desirous of changing it." (I can imagine Daddy asking, "What's wrong with sluttish?") They "will do any thing to come at Liquor, Cloaths, furniture, &cc. &cc. rather than work for it." Here, you understand, is someone who would spurn a hog inviting him to "Come eat me." God's people, like God's places, must be rigorously cultivated.

Today you can get from Cumberland Gap to Barbourville, Kentucky, in about fifty minutes, twenty-five if you drive like my daddy. In 1750, it took Dr. Thomas Walker ten days to cover the distance. At some point in his journey, Dr. Walker must have been curious enough to stick a berry in his mouth, but if he did he didn't write about it in his journal. Instead, "the first European settler in Kentucky" staked a preemptive claim to his little slice of Appalachia when he (or his flunkies) built a tiny but functional house and planted peaches and corn. By doing what multitudes of indolent wretches had neglected to do when they passed through what they foolishly assumed were common hunting grounds, free for anyone's enjoyment and use, Walker laid down an ethos: If you want to call these mountains yours, best grab a hoe. Sure, there's plenty for all if you just reach up into whatever custard tree droops its branches seductively down, but if you don't pull out a plow and cultivate that ground God gave you, you're Scum of the Earth

My Grandpa, who retired at seventy and unretired a month later, worked the family farm over most of the twentieth century. The last I saw him, he was stripped to the waist, shiny with sweat, and wrestling a Rototiller to a draw. He was right on eighty, brown as a nut, and had the body fat index of a whittled stick. He could have got with Dr. Walker's program. But Daddy never held a hoe in my entire acquaintance with him. The only times he and I even went into the fields were to pull turnips, slice them with his pocketknife, and eat them raw sprinkled with salt from a Morton box. Thus the land provided, though toilsome sweat befouled our sustenance. But the toil was another's, and Grandpa was even Presbyterian.❖

Jimmy Dean Smith is a professor of English at Union College. He is also the editor of the *Kentucky Philological Review*.

Will Legal Pot End Appalachia's Biggest Cash Crop?

Mark Lynn Ferguson

Image purchased from Can Stock Photo.

White lightning might be the Appalachian South's most famous vice, but green lightning is reported to be our most lucrative one. Pot production in the region is commonly valued at a whopping $4 billion annually. That's based on mountain counties in Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and it far exceeds legal agriculture in the same area, which generates closer to $2 billion.

Though pot is big business today, it is rooted in the organic gardens and geodesic domes of the 1960s. If you're over the age of forty, you no doubt knew some long haired, peace luvin', mountain hippies who had a private patch of weed. Some folks kept it under fluorescent lights in their back rooms. Others mixed it into their flower boxes. I know one couple who planted their prized hemp in a retired pig pen. To this day, they swear it was the most productive crop they've ever seen.

Wherever folks grew it, everybody seemed to be raising a little bud. Over time, some started raising a lot, giving rise to the economic juggernaut we see today, one Appalachia can no longer afford to ignore.

In the last eight years, coal production in the US has dropped some 15%, forcing massive layoffs and leaving thousands of mountain families in dire straits. We've all heard about former miners working for a fraction of their prior pay, selling their trucks, cars, or even homes to put food on the table. We've read about them going to social service offices, hats in hands, having to ask for help. Cities and towns across the region are hurting too, slashing expenses because their tax bases are eroding. In Martin County, Kentucky, for instance, the budget dropped almost 20% in three years thanks to coal's decline. That's a massive loss in the heart of Appalachia, and we need to stop the bleeding.

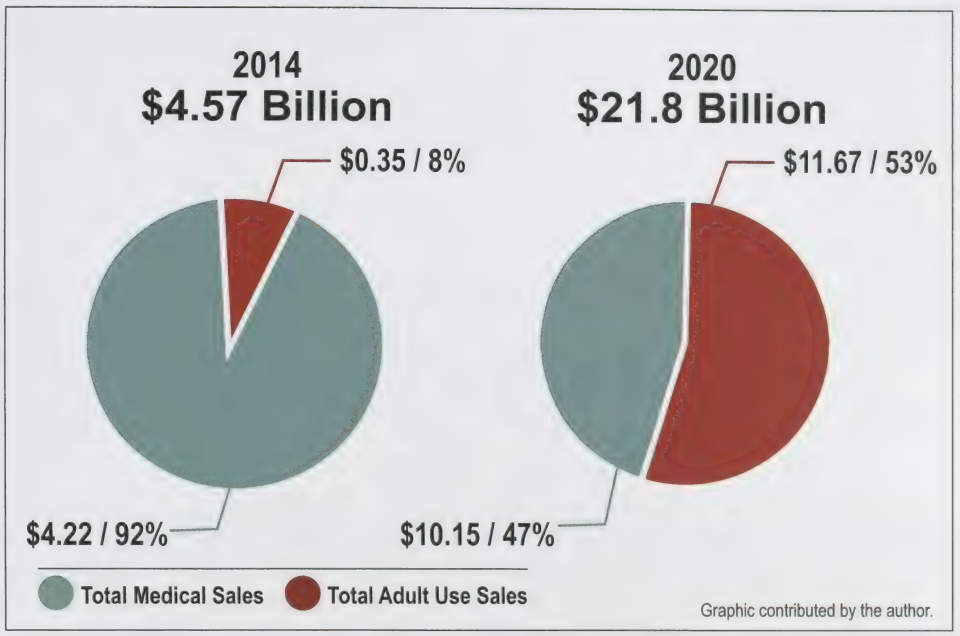
In the midst of this crisis, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, and West Virginia seized more than $2 billion worth of marijuana plants during 2014, cutting revenue in some of Appalachia's poorest counties and, in the process, putting law enforcement agents at risk. "We've had officers caught in fish hooks with fishing line at eye level," Sargent Jim Ingram of the Kentucky State Police told The History Channel several years back, "And we've had pipe bombs—explosive devices that were inside a marijuana plot."

Ironically, these extreme measures are often taken by regular people, mountain families intent on protecting their crops. The US Department of Justice says that, as with other kinds of farming, marijuana cultivation is handed down from one generation to the next.

"You remove the threat of arrest if these families become licensed, regulated businesses," said Morgan Fox of the advocacy group Marijuana Policy Project. "It would relieve a lot of the strain—people going in and out of jail all the time and the impact that can have on family."

While Appalachia continues to crack down on growers, public opinion about pot has shifted. Last October, a Gallop survey revealed that nearly 60 percent of Americans now favor the legalization of marijuana. It's a growing majority and may be enough to tip the policy scale.

In fact, in nearly half the country it already has. Marijuana use is legal in some form in twenty-three states and the District of Columbia, and cultivation is now a regulated enterprise in most of these places. Many more states have downgraded possession of small amounts of marijuana, putting it on par with a parking ticket.



Graphic contributed by the author.

Even some members of the GOP are on board. Republican Presidential frontrunner Donald Trump says he supports legal access to medical marijuana "100 percent," and while he opposes recreational use, he thinks states should set their own marijuana policies.

No doubt about it, pot is being decriminalized. As the movement picks up steam, Appalachia must face some tough questions. Will it continue to convict those who grow its biggest cash crop, putting both law enforcement and mountain families at risk? Will it ignore a 2015 report from The ArcView Group that found marijuana to be the nation's fastest growing industry? Will the region stand by and watch another of its economic pillars fall?

Now's the time to decide. More than thirty states are considering some form of marijuana reform legislation this year, including Appalachia's big four producers—Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Many of these bills contain provisions for large-scale cultivation. That creates a stark choice for Appalachian lawmakers. How they vote in 2016 may decide whether we retain our enviable position as America's pot patch or hand this already thriving industry to other states, telling them to grow their own. ❖

Mark Lynn Ferguson is a Roanoke native who lives outside Washington, D.C. He stays connected to his homeland through his blog *The Revivalist: Word from the Appalachian South.*

Cody And Randy

Michael Joslin

Cody Austion and Randy McKinney drive a team of Belgians. Photo by the author.

As dark clouds gather on the mountains, a small, seven-year-old boy, Cody Austion, his legs dangling from the padded seat, guides a sassafras-wood wagon pulled by a team of Belgians around a grassy knoll. Suddenly he slides forward so his feet can reach the toe board. He needs extra leverage to stop the team of 2000-pound horses providing the power for his rig. Randy McKinney, his great-uncle, eases his foot onto the front brakes to assist as he guides Cody through his apprenticeship as a horse master.

Cody and Randy are cultivators, like many generations before them who cultivated their own—lives, land, and children. Farmers' sons followed fathers into the fields, learning their acreage and the tools to work it. Early Appalachian settlers brought with them a heritage of manual labor traced back to their old countries—England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and other European states. Physical toil of men and domestic stock played the major role in taming mountainous territory that offered even a poor man a chance to carve his own place out of the wilderness. Men and women both welcomed the strenuous efforts that yielded the reward of independence and a bountiful life.

Today, development—not the encroaching wilderness—is the enemy of farmland, and many millennials live in a virtual world where the only labor is manipulating a control box that creates action on a screen. "It's almost impossible to find a young man who wants to work, and work hard," says Mike McKinney, Randy's brother, who has run his own construction business for several decades while maintaining a farm on ancestral lands in Carter County, Tennessee, and keeping it up with real horsepower. He has built his home, barns, pastures, and hayfields on a knoll where his grandfather was born and raised and where Mike is raising his grandson, Cody Austion.

Across the road on another hill, Randy has retired recently to the family home place their father built into a working farm where he raised a family of four children. Here Randy keeps three Belgians and the harness and equipment to work them. He retired at age sixty-eight after working construction, logging, and overseeing maintenance at the local prison for many years. Both brothers have kept up the family tradition of hard work with hands and horses. While their children found new ways of life, a member of the latest generation has decided to follow in the footsteps

Cody Austion and Randy McKinney pose with Belgians. Photo by the author.

behind equine rumps, working with his hands as he emulates his elders. Cody at seven years of age has already put in time as a field hand and horse master.

Instead of living in a virtual world of warfare with zombies, vampires, and aliens, he cares for horses and mules, cattle and chickens, gardens and hayfields, as well as participating in horse-drawn ceremonies with Mike and Randy at weddings and funerals and taking horses to demonstration rides at schools. On a summer Monday morning the trio gathers at the old home place after a busy weekend when they took Randy's horses to work a wedding. Cody helped with the horses the whole ceremonial day, holding them in check as Mike and Randy hooked them to the decorated wagon, driving them to familiarize the beasts with the course to the altar, and assisting anyway he could. As farm children have for thousands of years, Cody has developed a familiarity with the normal cycle of life. I have watched Cody over the years as he has participated in such activities, and he exudes enthusiasm and energy as he works. While I have found him bone-tired at times, I have never seen him sulk or shirk.

As we relax at Randy's east Tennessee place in warm August sunshine, I ask Cody how long he has been working horses. Wearing a blue ball cap, a sleeveless yellow T-shirt with a skateboard image, and blue jean shorts, he replies, "About two years. But you want to ask me about mules, probably a long, long time with them."

The height of one of Randy's geldings' legs and weighing less, Cody with his six-feet-three-inch tall grandfather has just led down two geldings and a mare, each weighing a ton or more. The boy is at home with the Belgians, but he says he likes mules better. For the past several years Mike has turned to mules that have won prizes at several fairs. He recently got a new young pair to start training, and Cody can't wait to get them working regularly.

"Why, I just like mules. They will do everything better than horses. We got two babies now. They've been worked a little bit," says Cody, looking across the valley to where the two-year-olds graze in Mike's pasture. "We need to work them, but we are just covered up with work. We

need to work at both places."

The repetition of the word *work* shows that in addition to cultivating the land, the McKinneys have invested themselves in cultivating the boy, teaching him the rewards of labor, not the least of which is joy in the effort itself. Randy, the senior McKinney now, knows that beginning young with hard work and horses brings continuing rewards. He's been driving draft stock for quite a while.

"Oh Lordy, fifty years or longer. I'll be seventy my next birthday, and I've been fooling with horses since I was ten years old. Me and Dad bought one together then. It was just a big pony, about 1000 pounds or so, just a chunk, best work horse there ever was," he says, a smile shining in his white beard as next to Cody he stands in his overalls, sleeveless blue T-shirt, and camo cap.

"At that time there wasn't any tractors in this country, so I worked our horse. Dad had a job at the textile mill, and I plowed, pulled logs, pretty much whatever we needed," says Randy, then points down to the bottom land below. "I was about twelve years old when I plowed that bottom down there. I've pretty well kept up with work stock ever since."

Mike also had an early start. Randy is fifteen years older than his brother, and along with his sister helped raise him. "My sister and I would just about fight to see who was going to take care of him that day," says Randy. When a cousin gave Mike a pony, "when he was just a little feller," the youngster jumped right in.

"Mike made harness with baling twine. I went down there one time, and he had the awfullest mess of string on that pony. But Mike had a little sled, and that pony would pull him around all over the place," says Randy, sweeping his hand around to indicate the farm.

Since then there have always been horses or mules or both at the McKinney place. The family raised its own food. They plowed and cultivated a large garden and raised tobacco. They pastured cattle to kill a beef or two each year, along with a couple of hogs. A large flock of chickens filled the chicken house that still stands, a weathered wooden structure up behind the house.

"I have chickens, too," pipes up Cody. "Polish whites."

He then gives me a rundown on the chicken situation. He and Susie Hamilton, a lifelong friend of Mike's, increased their flock to twenty this year, although a couple died and they had to get rid of one of two roosters because they kept fighting each other. He also has a peacock as part of his stock, as well as the herd of cattle he helps Mike maintain.

Randy puts his arm around Cody and says, "This is my little buddy here. We're going to teach him to drive these horses. He knows pretty well what's going on already. He drove them over at the Bible school when we took them to show the kids. And he drove well at the wedding place.

"He does just whatever anybody is doing. He just steps in and helps. Whether it's shoveling manure or whatever, he steps up."

Cody lives with Mike across the way on his farm, but the boy works both sides of the valley when needed. Under the tutelage of his Grandfather Mike and Great-Uncle Randy and with the gentle guidance of Susie and his mother, Kara Austion, Cody receives an old fashioned education in the real world where hard labor and dedication to a task bring tangible rewards as well as being a blessing in itself.

While Randy battles several health problems—leukemia, COPD, congestive heart failure—and has survived two heart attacks and pancreatic surgery, he looks forward to working with Cody as he and Mike teach the boy old-time virtues and skills. "I don't like to complain," says Randy. "I just go until I can't go no more; then I sit down. But being back at the old home place makes me feel better."

With the two brothers flanking him on the doorsteps of the house their father built, Cody is right at home and sees a future that looks a lot like the past. However, he is a child of the twenty-first century. When I ask him if he would rather have horses or a tractor he answers without hesitation.

"Both," he says.

While academics strive to preserve heritage in books and museums, and entrepreneurs in tourist attractions, it is a living presence on the McKinney farms, not enshrined, but part of a life that cultivates both land and appreciation for work. For Appalachia to survive as a bountiful land of plenty rather than a pleasant place to escape the city, such careful nurturing must find its place. Cody sees land not as a commodity to sell, but as the ground on which he works.

Michael Joslin teaches English and directs the Stephenson Center for Appalachia at Lees-McRae College. He has published six books on Appalachia.

A Poet's Vegetable Epiphany

Rita Quillen

Gardens are a perpetual gift.
I don't mean all the tomatoes and cucumbers,
sweet snap peas multiplying in piles.
I'm talking metaphor—
Their symmetrical shapes, every color and smell
whimsical overgrown lushness and sensuality,
an artist's dream.
You can talk about laying out perfect rows—
the spacing, the preparation, the tending—
about harvest and pestilence,
storms and scavengers, about plants
that look gorgeous
but never mature—
about earthly treasure and heaven's promise,
roots and buds
as if the garden was created by a poet,
someone who knew
we needed things to gather and eat,
the juice dripping off our pens.

This poem originally appeared in *Jimson Weed*.

Rita Quillen's most recent collection, *Her Secret Dream*, was named the Outstanding Poetry Book of the Year by the Appalachian Writers Association in 2008.

The Pollination Project:
A Partnership Takes Flight

Randy Sanders

Carmen Duncan is pictured in side views and back view wearing the BUZZFEST Queen Bee costume that she created for the festival. Photos courtesy Keith Dixon Studios.

In the March 2016 issue of *The Atlantic*, James Fallows wrote a cover story entitled "How America Is Putting Itself Back Together." The article chronicles Fallows's findings after a 54,000-mile, three-year journey around America—including parts of Appalachia—in a single-engine plane.

An advertising hook for *The Atlantic* article notes: "Most people in the US believe their country is going to hell. But they're wrong." Why wrong? A central theme of the article is that the hard work of putting America back together is happening now, piece-by-piece, at the local and regional level all across the country. Fallows writes: "Many people are discouraged by what they hear and read about America, but the closer they are to the action at home, the better they like what they see." Consider the Pollination Project in Johnson City, Tennessee, as yet one more example of local community partners acting in concert to put America back together.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, in late 2006 beekeepers began reporting a significant spike in bee colony losses (30%-90% of their hives). While this was not the first such report (scientific literature mentions honey bee losses going back to the 1880s), continued losses after 2006 set off alarm bells. Soon thereafter, Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) entered the public consciousness. According to the Environmental Protection Agency website, CCD is defined as "the phenomenon that occurs when the majority of worker bees in a colony disappear and leave behind a queen, plenty of food, and a few nurse bees to care for the remaining immature bees and the queen."

No one cause has been found for CCD, but four principal factors or combination of factors have been suggested: pathogens (viruses and bacteria); parasites (particularly a mite ominously named Varroa destructor); management stressors (that include migratory stress and overcrowding); and environmental stressors (like pesticides and herbicides). Dr. Darrell Moore, Honey Bee Researcher in the Department of Biology at East Tennessee State University (ETSU), states, "The scientific jury is still out on the cause of CCD. New research is finding all sorts of sub-lethal effects of neonicotinoid insecticides on the behavior of honey bees as well as other pollinators. Some of these effects may or may not lead to CCD but nevertheless still have adverse effects on the ability of the insects to efficiently pollinate flowers. Sorting this all out is difficult work because of the sheer complexity of factors and interactions that come into play in the environment."

Dr. Judith Hammond, Director of ETSU's Pollination Project for the Center for Community Outreach, adds, "The demise of honey bees is like 'the canary in the mine.' Without bees for pollination, there are dire consequences for food production including crops such as apples, almonds,

blueberries, pumpkins, squash, culinary herbs, coffee, and more."

ETSU's main campus is a mile from downtown Johnson City—a straight shot via the West State of Franklin Road thoroughfare. Understanding ETSU's and the Center for Community Outreach's long-standing interest in downtown revitalization as a collective component of an economic development mission, Dr. Hammond opened a downtown office. As she puts it, "A vital downtown and a vital university campus go hand-in-hand."

In discussions with community stakeholders and ETSU colleagues, Hammond used the word *pollination* as a metaphor to convey the message of shared resources, shared ecosystem, and shared public spaces. Hammond recalls a transcendent day seven years ago that likely underpins her metaphorical use of the word: "A shimmering swarm of honey bees flew into a hollowed out shrub in my suburban backyard. It was love at first sight! The next morning when they were gone, I typed, 'Where do swarms go?' in my web search engine. That was the beginning of my education about the magical inner world of bees."

What happened as a result of Hammond's fortuitous *pollination* metaphor has led to a campus and community movement—the Pollination Project. She says, "On the ETSU campus, the project has been elevated by its interdisciplinary nature: geoscientists, engineers, artists, and staff from the Center for Community Outreach have joined together to create a collective buzz."

Catherine Murray, a professor in the ETSU Department of Art and Design, exemplifies that interdisciplinary buzz. An ecologically-minded, life-long gardener, Murray was quick to involve herself and like-minded students in the project. Together, they decided their contribution would be a pollination garden and sculpture at the Art Annex.

The Art Annex, a repurposed building on the southern edge of campus, houses ceramics and sculpture studios. Murray says, "The Annex pollinator garden, located on a hill just above the parking lot, has been tilled and soil amended with the help of Kathleen Moore, ETSU Director of Sustainability, and the assistance of ETSU Facilities. The plants, soil, and mulch, and materials for a sculpture to be sited in the garden, were funded by an ETSU Sustainability Grant. Woody shrubs, including viburnum, high bush blueberries, and switchgrass were planted last fall by grounds crew employees. Perennial native flowering plants, including Purple Coneflowers, Butterfly Weed, Button Snakeroot, Asters, Penstemon, Dense Blazingstar, Goldenrod, Catmint, Ironweed, and Common Milkweed, will be planted this spring by both art and sustainability students, Kathleen Moore, and me."

Murray and her students decided on the image of a stag standing on a hillside—a symbolic guardian—as the sculpture for their garden. Murray enlisted the help of Mark Russell, a glass artist with a studio in nearby Greeneville, Tennessee. She said, "Mark taught my students how to make colorful flowers out of molten glass. We drilled out the flowers so that they could be threaded onto steel rods which will be welded onto the frame of the stag. Our life-sized stag will be festooned with glass flowers standing in a flowering pollinator garden. We hope to have the sculpture installed in the Annex garden by May 6-7, 2016, just in time for the pollinator celebration downtown."

The May pollination celebration capped nine months' of "What's the Buzz" educational programming that included titles such as "Downtown's Living Landscape," "Catch the Rainwater and Prepare Your Garden," "Grow Earthworms and Enhance Your Garden Soil," "Grow Local: Native Plants and Herbs." Another program, "Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden," featured celebrated author, landscape designer, and photographer Rick Darke. Not all educational programming related directly to gardening. In February of this year local experts discussed the crucial issue of historical flooding problems at ETSU and downtown, residential stormwater management, and the benefits of infiltration beds. Many of the "What's the Buzz" educational programs were hosted at the Johnson City Public Library.

The library's director, Bob Swanay, was an early supporter of the Pollinator Project by inviting Hammond and her colleagues to help secure funding for the project's first pollinator garden on library property. Hammond worked closely with Swanay to identify and then consult with Sitework Studios from Asheville, North Carolina, to plan the garden. Primary funding for the garden was made possible through the award of a Green Development Grant from the Tennessee Valley Authority. She also worked with Dr. Ingrid Luffman, ETSU Department of Geosciences, and Jason Foster, LDA Engineering, to write a grant to redesign the front yard of the library, construct an infiltration bed that captures stormwater runoff from the library's roof, and cover the bed with enriched soil and pollinator-friendly landscaping. The library is now an exemplary public property that supports the green infrastructure initiative of Johnson City's Public Works Department.

Speaking on behalf of the library, Swanay says, "Our initial interest was raised when Judith reached out to the library to discuss connecting downtown Johnson City, ETSU, and the library with a pollinator pathway. We were excited to participate in an effort to highlight the importance of ecological conservation and preservation in our area, with concern about bees being an important part of that effort.

I was prompted in a helpful way to think about the values of the library and how they could be better reflected in our grounds and landscaping approach.

"We then took these ideas even further with our Tennessee Stormwater Association Green Energy grant. Our new infiltration system will not only help mitigate the impact of major rain events downtown but will serve as an educational/conservation awareness project for years to come. Prior to this, the library's green energy project was to retrofit new energy-saving lighting. I have come to see these efforts as part of a never-ending process to increase efficiency and to strive for a more harmonious relationship with the ecosystem around us."

More and more people are contributing their energy and ideas to the Pollination Project. Grants have been written and awarded; discussions to involve Tweetsie Trail folks are underway (the Tweetsie Trail is a 9.5 mile crushed stone pathway—part of the nationwide Rails-to-Trails Conservancy—that has a trailhead in downtown Johnson City); many downtown businesses are onboard, growing untreated plants in sidewalk planters; and Downtown Farming Hydroponics (a private business on aptly-named Cherry Street) has stepped up to serve as an educational headquarters. Even the "What's the Buzz" logo designer, Kelly Porter, has become a bee enthusiast and spokesperson for the program.

To end where we began, James Fallows points out that in America the closer we look at the action in our own communities, the better we like what we see. His observation may square with what you see in your community. If not, ask yourself a simple question: "What can I do to better my community?"

Judith Hammond regularly asks that question; so do Catherine Murray and Bob Swanay and Darrell Moore and many other ETSU and Johnson City citizens. This summer, Johnson City will experience the full bloom of the Pollination Project's first stage. More pollinator gardens in the downtown-to-campus corridor will hopefully follow—along with friendly pollinators, such as bees, bats, beetles, butterflies, flies, hummingbirds, moths . . . and, of course, human beings.

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Ten Things You Can Do to Help Pollinators

- Incorporate shrubs and trees such as dogwood, blueberry, cherry, plum, willow, and poplar into your landscaping;
- Plant flowers of different shapes and colors to attract a wide variety of pollinators;
- Plant in clumps rather than single plants.
- Purchase organic food when possible.
- Avoid using herbicides as well as pesticides.
- Leave dead tree trunks in your landscape for wood-nesting bees and beetles;
- Provide spaces for non-stagnant water to collect such as in a shallow dish, bowl, or birdbath.
- Educate yourself and others about the benefits of gardening and pollinators. For example, did you know that Monarch butterfly caterpillars live exclusively on milkweed plants and that many of these plants have been killed off by herbicides?
- Don't be intimidated by gardening—simply buy a couple of packets of organic seed, such as sunflowers, zinnias, and cosmos, and toss them in a bed to create beautiful flowers that will attract all kinds of pollinators all summer long.
- Remember, it doesn't require a lot of effort or money to support pollinators!

Randy Sanders is the managing editor of *Now & Then*.

The Wilderness:
Debates and Developments on Camp Creek Bald

O.J. Early

View from the top of Camp Creek Bald. Photo by the author.

Lights twinkled in the night sky as visitors reached a ski lodge, luxurious restaurant, and small, circular cabins. Known to locals as Viking Mountain, Camp Creek Bald was Greene County, Tennessee's, only resort. Promising the best food in town, a view of five states, horseback riding, and an Olympic-sized swimming pool, the mountaintop resort towered over Greeneville's southern edge.

That was forty years ago. Now, visitors to the top of the mountain notice a slew of out-of-place features: a half-dozen tiles anchored at the edge of the meadow; random sections of paved road in a clearing that looks otherwise deserted; and large slabs of concrete resting at various points on the bald. The meadow is where hikers go to hop on the Appalachian Trail or sightseers stop for a perfect sunset. Sometimes, it's where vandals practice their craft. It is the county's modern-day ghost town.

Across Appalachia, debates have raged over the fate of the mountains since President Lyndon Johnson pushed the Wilderness Act of 1964 through Congress. The commercial advancements and subsequent abandonment in the east Tennessee and western North Carolina Bald Mountains provides a prototype for the sometimes heated disputes among environmentalists, hunters, and hikers.

In the 1940s, the top of Camp Creek Bald wasn't so different from the way it is today. Cattle grazed in the meadow. Outdoor enthusiasts marked the few who journeyed to the top. In the mid 1960s, a group of Greeneville men built the first leg of a ski slope, plus a few chalets around Jones Meadow. The group's work marked the start of the mountain's modern history. Florida businessman Frank E. Kaehn promised a year-round resort. He bought the property in 1968, and the county enjoyed its first and only ski season in February 1972. About 200 people skied on the mountain on opening day, a forerunner of what the county could have had during the snowy months.

R. Eugene Holley, a former Georgia politician and wealthy entrepreneur, bought the property from a bankrupt Kaehn later that same year. Holley planned to turn the property into a private hideaway for his family and business associates. He flew international businessmen by helicopter to the top of the mountain, including American astronauts in 1977. Struggling finances and corruption plagued Holley, who was arrested and jailed for fraud. The property changed owners for another decade before the US Forest Service purchased the area in the late 1980s. By then, what structures remained had been vandalized, and Forest officials removed what was left of the resort by the mid 1990s.

The development and its ensuing abandonment atop Camp Creek Bald are the most measurable series of events in the county's mountain past. But more significant changes would follow. Over the next fifty years, debates exploded over the future of the mountains. For much of the late 1970s, state officials debated the conversion of nearly 18,000 acres of the Cherokee National Forest in Greene County into a

Wilderness Area. Public discussions grew contentious. Most local officials, including then-Congressman Jimmy Quillen and the Greene County Chamber of Commerce opposed the shift in classification from "National Forest" to "Wilderness Area." On the other hand, at least two regional environmental groups supported the switch. In 1979, political leaders won that round. The mountain remains classified as a National Forest.

Had conservationists emerged victorious in the 1970s, today's visitors would encounter a much different place. In a Wilderness Area, for example, logging, mining, and most forms of extraction are almost always prohibited. While hunting is allowed, hunters must remove their kills by hand—no ATVs, trucks, or other vehicles are permitted. "The main thing about a Wilderness Area, you don't want to leave any type of human imprint. That includes mostly any type of mechanical equipment usage. Even bicycles are considered mechanical equipment, so there would be no mountain biking today on places like Camp Creek Bald," said Cheryl Summers, recreation program manager with the Unaka Ranger District. "There are some limitations with Wilderness Areas. It's different because there are some things that you are restricted from doing, and you have to be aware of that. Even when you are fighting fire, you have to use hand tools—no kind of equipment unless you get special permission." The Sampson Wilderness Area is Greene County's only Wilderness Area. It comprises nearly 8,000 acres and cuts through several counties in northeast Tennessee.

In the late 1990s, discussions erupted again about the future of mountains in Greene County. The Cherokee National Forest held numerous public meetings to develop a new management plan. Hunters and hikers offered suggestions and issued complaints about the use of National Forest land in Greene County. In one three-hour session, participants were split in their assessments. Some charged that trails on Greene Mountain were overgrown, while others said the use of all-terrain vehicles damaged the Appalachian Trail. A few said the mountains should be more hunter-friendly.

Despite its call for increased protection of land and streams, as well as a reduction of land designated for timber management, conservationists decried the management plans released in 2004.

"Polls say that three-fourths of the population wants strengthened protection," declared Hugh Irwin, conservation planner with the Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition. "But these plans stop short and leave many areas open to destructive management practices that threaten our communities' clean water, recreational areas, and sustainability."

It's unclear what the future holds for the mountains that separate northeast Tennessee and western North Carolina. Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker, Tennessee's two Republican senators, have introduced a conservation proposal four times in recent years. Dubbed the Tennessee Wilderness Act, it would have safeguarded almost 20,000 acres of public land inside the Cherokee National Forest. In Unicoi and Washington Counties, the act would have added almost 3,000 acres to the Sampson Mountain Wilderness Area. Alexander and Corker's bill was approved by two Senate committees, but it was never debated on the Senate floor. In 2016, northeast Tennessee Congressman Phil Roe introduced a similar bill. It's not yet clear whether it will gain traction.

None of the bills, however, would have aided Camp Creek Bald, or a handful of the mountain tops in eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina. A drive to the top of Greene County's tallest mountain peak, with litter and graffiti highlighting sections of the trip, may leave a few with the feeling that the mountain that was once heralded as the latest in commercial developments has been forgotten. "I'm sure many Greene Countians and other east Tennesseans continue to have memories of the years when there was a lot of excitement about the mountain and what was going on there," recalled John M. Jones Jr., former editor of *The Greeneville Sun.* Jones wrote several articles about the mountain's development in the 1960s and 1970s. "At its height, the lodge and the overall development were quite impressive," he wrote, "complete with good food in a setting that offered an unsurpassed view of the county looking north from near the North Carolina border. It is, I would say, a vanished dream."

When some residents recall the money-making expansion on the mountain, there's little left but contempt for the developers. In a speech to the Greene County Commission several years ago, Viking Mountain Road resident Charles Rice said many of the investors' actions were likely illegal. He wanted the mountain community known for its natural beauty, not commercial exploitation. "We both love the mountain," said he and his wife, Helen. "And we will be here for the rest of our lives if it is God's will."

A portion of this article, written by the author, first appeared in *The Greeneville Sun.*

O.J. Early holds a Master's Degree in history from East Tennessee State University and is a part-time journalist at *The Greeneville Sun.*

Cultivating Conservation in the Southern Appalachians

Angela Shepherd

Day's End on Yellow Mountain Bald, in the stunning Highlands of Roan. Photo by Witt Langstraff, Jr.

In an open room with windows overlooking the breathtaking sweep of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, we ask a group of people to share memories or thoughts about the mountains. Someone reflects, "Going to the mountains is like going home." The phrase resonates—heads shake in agreement. This is something we know, we feel deeply. It is a common thread winding through our personal experiences. Going to the Mountains *is* like going home. The idea resonates because people feel connected to the land: Whether they have lived here all their lives or just moved to the area, young and old alike experience an intrinsic connection—a connection that draws them to the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC). At its core, conservation is about cultivating relationships with the land.

Over time, we—volunteers, staff, partners, members, guests—have logged thousands, perhaps millions, of miles slogging through mud and rain, rocky trails and open balds, scrubby pastures and deeply tilled soil, through crisp streams and over precarious precipices. Why? Because we are connected to this land. These mountains are old, old, old—some of the oldest on the earth—and they accrue a sense of wonder and depth from the passage of so many hands and feet.

For the past forty-two years, SAHC has worked to protect the unique plant and animal habitat, clean water, farmland, scenic beauty, and spaces for people to recreate in the mountains of east Tennessee and western North Carolina. Our conservation work includes tracts in such popular locations as the Highlands of Roan, Rocky Fork, the Smoky Mountains, and North Carolina's Mt. Mitchell State Park. Some folks engage in this work because they are cultivating their own relationships with the past, protecting land because it reminds them of where they come from—stories they don't want to lose, family heritage they treasure. For others, these relationships are new—cultivated in response to the changing, shrinking global world. Crowded out of urban centers where starless skies seem suffocating, people seek escape and rejuvenation on the trails and in the mountains.

That's one reason David Smith, former SAHC Trustee and Roan Naturalist, returns to the Highlands of Roan with his family. A globally important ecosystem straddling the border between Tennessee and North Carolina, the high-

elevation grassy balds and spruce-fir forests of the Roan Massif are home to rare native plants and animals, such as the Gray's Lily, Northern Carolina Flying Squirrel, and Roan Mountain Bluet.

"Being in the Roan resonates deep down with people," says Smith. "It's a strong way to reconnect us with the natural world. Being able to go up there and enjoy the world in a natural state reminds us of what we miss in day-to-day life, living in town—especially if you are fortunate enough to go up on a clear night and see the Milky Way. It makes you pause, being reminded that we are still connected to the planet and the universe."

Smith's relationship with SAHC and the Roan Highlands first developed when he became the seasonal Roan Naturalist in 1997. "I think I fell in love with the Roan pretty quickly after spending time up there as a seasonal ecologist," he recalls. "I was doing something really unique, learning about new plants and animals and collaborating with scientists. But my favorite part was interacting with people on the mountain; I really enjoyed talking to the general public and educating them about the Roan."

Smith continues to share his passion for the Highlands. As a scout leader, he now organizes camping and hiking outings to the Roan, which he says have become one of the trips most requested by parents. He has volunteered for almost twenty years at SAHC's annual Grassy Ridge Mow-off, where volunteers help manage the open grassy balds.

"Being able to help out is important," says Smith. "You feel like you're accomplishing something, making a difference. It also gives me an excuse to get back up on the mountain and experience the Roan, and to enjoy the social aspect—sharing stories and travels with the other volunteers."

David Smith enjoys the camaraderie of volunteers who manage the grassy balds of the Roan. Photo courtesy SAHC.

Smith has been cultivating a love and appreciation for the Roan in his growing family, as well; his wife and children enjoy adventures in the mountains. The family even named their daughter "Asa Roan," after the Highlands and the famous botanist Asa Gray, who discovered the distinctive Gray's Lily. When his son Otto was five years old and wanted to go backpacking in the Roan with his dad for the first time, Smith was a little apprehensive—but Otto turned out to be an intrepid outdoor adventurer.

"His first backpacking experience was in one of those heavy downpours, with the rain stinging your face because it was coming down so hard," recalls Smith. "But he just looked up at me and said, 'This is so much fun!' It's an attitude he still carries to this day."

Otto has joined in volunteering for the Grassy Ridge Mow-off over the past five years, and in 2014 SAHC awarded the father-and-son team the Stanley A. Murray Volunteer of the Year Award.

Building partnerships and relationships with partners in the landscape is one way that SAHC cultivates conservation. According to Roan Stewardship Director Marquette Crocket, one of the most important aspects of SAHC's work in the Highlands of Roan is coordinating conservation on a landscape scale—across agencies, conservation areas, and volunteer groups.

"We serve as a nexus to help coordinate those efforts," she says, "and focus on looking at the landscape as a whole. A lot of that comes from being there since the beginning of Roan conservation efforts. Our longstanding relationship with the land is what has enabled us to cultivate a love and understanding of the Roan in people like David Smith, and to foster connections with people who have gone on to have careers in conservation." These former SAHC Roan Naturalists include Travis Knowles (Associate Professor of Biology at Francis Marion

University), Allan Trently (Environmental Scientist at the Tennessee Deptartment of Environment and Conservation), and Tom Laughlin (Associate Professor at ETSU).

The historic Tilson Farm in Unicoi County, Tennessee, provides another example of people cultivating relationships with land—from historic family ties to a training ground for budding environmentalists. Protected by a conservation easement, the 377-acre homestead and cove were the boyhood home of John Quillin (John Q.) Tilson, who served as a US Representative from Connecticut for almost twenty-two years and House Majority leader for six. With roots tracing back to the Mayflower, Tilson's family had migrated to the Nolichucky River area and then to a secluded cove south of Erwin, Tennessee.

"In this house, humble though quite the best in the community, entirely without the aid of doctors and nurses, were born eight children," he remarked in a published account, *The Tilson Family*.

The family lived in an existing log cabin on the property until his father built a two-story, white farmhouse in 1879. The homestead, characteristic of its era, also consisted of a springhouse, granary, and smokehouse. To assist with hardships suffered during the Great Depression, John Q., who had prospered as a lawyer, eventually purchased the homestead tract from his siblings. The land is now collectively owned by his descendants.

In the 1990s, Tilson's daughter, Katharine Tilson Murray, worked with SAHC to permanently protect the homestead tract with a conservation easement, and the family plans to own and enjoy this property for many years to come.

However, conservation doesn't end with the recording of an easement document. Owning and managing a tract of this size, encircled by a public road, comes with its own challenges. Over the decades, trash and debris illegally dumped from the roadway accumulated in gullies and on hillsides. Landowners and caretakers Ken and Lotta Murray worked steadily to reduce these debris piles, but the situation required concerted effort to make a big impact. Recently, a group of dedicated ETSU student volunteers and SAHC stewardship staff joined them to remove 1,300 pounds of trash and debris from the conservation easement property, along with a number of tires. The service day provided an opportunity for the volunteers to cultivate a new relationship with the land—gaining understanding about natural resource management while making a positive impact in the world.

Such volunteer experiences provide important occasions for people to gain understanding about the interconnection between humanity and the environment. According to SAHC's Stewardship and Conservation Planning Director, Hanni Muerdter, "An obstacle faced by conservationists in general is getting people to understand that there are real, tangible benefits from protecting land and resources—like having clean water to drink. Wildlife habitat, ecosystem services, climate-change resiliency, carbon sequestration—these things impact people's daily lives, even though they may not realize it. Nature helps improve stress levels, and much of our local economy is rooted in the scenic beauty that surrounds us. To have people understand this, to develop the foresight to protect these natural resources, you have to help people have one-to-one relationships with the land."

In essence, SAHC's work is threefold: We protect critical habitat, farmland, and fresh water sources; we steward these resources to ensure their protection in perpetuity; and we organize recreational excursions and volunteer opportunities to connect people with the land. At each of these junctures, SAHC cultivates the relationships between people and the land, as stewards, protectors, and beneficiaries of the land's bounty. ❖

Angela Shepherd is the Communications Director of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy. Her passion for conservation stems from childhood experiences in the mountains, and a desire for her children to grow up enjoying the same.

He Names the Trees

Thomas Alan Holmes

"A mountain laurel," Bennie says,
five yards in front, at Cumberland,
"a cottonwood," like world's first man,
he names the trees, the blackhaw, ash,
in recognition. Had I learned
to call the redbud "Judas tree,"
to tell the dogwood past its loss
of Easter petals? "Sassafras,"
beneath his breath, surprised
somehow to see it here. The ash
that I know best, black locust, birch,
and hickory; in springtime I
feel bark and look for last fall's leaves.

Thomas Alan Holmes, a professor of English at East Tennessee State University, lives in Johnson City. He has published in *Louisiana Literature*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *The Connecticut Review*, and *North American Review*.

Appalachia Then and Now:
Examining Changes to the Region Since 1965

Published below are four key findings from a recent Appalachian Regional Commission executive summary. *Now & Then* asked four Appalachian scholars to respond to these key findings. Their commentary begins on page twenty-eight.

1. ARC represents a highly valued and active player in the Appalachian region's economic development, supporting state and local partners in their efforts to transform their communities.

Since 1965, ARC has made nearly 25,000 non-highway strategic investments in the region. Working with federal, state, and local partners, ARC has invested more than $3.8 billion in these projects.

These investments supported a variety of community and economic development initiatives, including basic infrastructure improvements, job creation initiatives, and leadership development. For every dollar in ARC funds, state and local partners were able to leverage an average of $2.50 from other federal, state and local funds, as well as $6.40 in private-sector investments.

In addition, more than $9 billion has been obligated since 1965 for the Appalachian Development Highway System, which is now 89 percent complete or under construction. When finished, the 3,090-mile ADHS will connect almost every part of the region to an interstate-quality highway and to the national Interstate Highway System.

2. ARC has had a significant and important impact on the region's economic vitality.

Over the past fifty years (with much higher appropriations in the earlier years of the program), ARC's $3.8 billion in non-highway investments have resulted in nearly 312,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs for the region and $10.5 billion (in constant 2013 dollars) in additional earnings.

Between 2007 and 2013, ARC non-highway investments accounted for nearly 10,000 jobs and $400 million in regional earnings. These impacts do not include the benefits accruing as a result of the investments ARC has leveraged over the years.

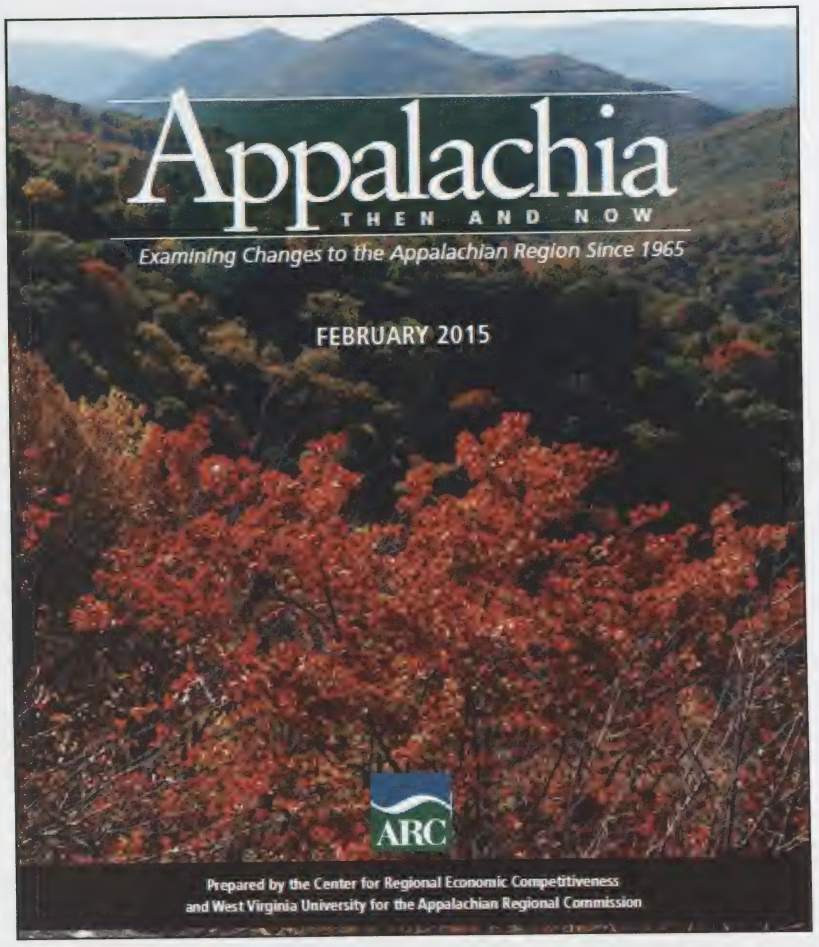
Furthermore, our research demonstrates that counties receiving ARC investments grew at a slightly faster pace than similar counties that did not receive ARC investments. Using a rigorous quasi- experimental research method, our analysis suggests that ARC investments helped counties add employment at a 4.2 percent faster pace, and per capita income at a 5.5 percent faster pace, than similar counties that did not receive ARC investments.

Moreover, leaders in the region expressed consensus about the value of ARC's role as a catalyst in helping to make projects happen that might not otherwise have gone forward. In interviews with over 220 local, state, and federal stakeholders in every Appalachian state, ARC was praised for helping leaders respond to uniquely local problems and for its ability to leverage other resources (by seeding new projects or providing the "last dollars" in) when projects did not fit neatly into other funding program models and might not have otherwise happened.

3. ARC has made progress toward helping the Appalachian region reach socioeconomic parity with the nation, but much work remains in moving some key indicators.

ARC's strategic plan has four major goals: (1) increasing job opportunities and per capita income in the region; (2) strengthening the capacity of the people of Appalachia to compete in the global economy; (3) developing and improving the region's infrastructure; and (4) building the ADHS to reduce Appalachia's isolation. On measures

The key findings are reprinted with permission from the ARC.


Appalachia
THEN AND NOW
Examining Changes to the Appalachian Region Since 1965
FEBRUARY 2015
ARC
Prepared by the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness
and West Virginia University for the Appalachian Regional Commission

Cover of the February 2015 Appalachian Regional Commission executive summary "Examining Changes to the Appalachian Region Since 1965." Image courtesy the ARC.

related to poverty, income disparity, unemployment, the industrial mix, and housing quality, the region has improved significantly. For instance, there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of Appalachian counties where the share of the population living in poverty exceeds 150 percent of the national average. The number of high-poverty counties in the region (those with poverty rates above 150 percent of the US average) declined from 295 in 1960 to 107 for the period 2008–2012. The overall poverty rate for Appalachia is almost half that of 1960, dropping from over 30 percent to just under 17 percent.

4. ARC has not yet fully accomplished its mission of bringing the region to parity with the rest of the nation on key socioeconomic indicators.

The region still lags in many key areas. The region's population growth is relatively stagnant, reflecting an economy that lags in terms of employment growth and educational attainment, so that there are not enough high quality jobs to support its citizens. Government transfer payments account for one-quarter of all personal income, a 41 percent higher rate than the rest of the nation. By comparison, the ratio was 17 percent after the 1981-82 recession, about 35 percent higher than the rest of the nation. Some, but certainly not all, of this increase can be explained by the rise in citizens aged sixty-five and over now eligible for Social Security.

Furthermore, the region's citizens have relatively poorer health outcomes (in terms of mortality rates as well as the prevalence of obesity and diabetes), reflecting changes in modern-day life that have reduced the quality of life for many residents. In addition, the region remains relatively more isolated from the rest of the nation because the ADHS is not yet completed and, increasingly, because the region lags the rest of the nation in access to affordable highspeed broadband service.

Four Appalachian Scholars Respond to: "Appalachia Then and Now: Examining Changes to the Region Since 1965"

Dr. Deborah Markley is Co-Founder and Managing Director, Center for Rural Entrepreneurship

"Appalachia Then and Now" measured the region's progress toward achieving parity with the nation during fifty years of the Appalachian Regional Commission's investments. Findings show a region that has gained in many ways; yet the need for strategic investment remains. What is striking about the continued disparities is their common cause—an economy that is not creating quality job and career opportunities that will keep and attract people to the region, that is not creating conditions for improved health, that is not motivating more people to pursue higher education and training in order to qualify for

Dr. Grace Edwards is Professor Emerita of Appalachian Studies and English at Radford University

As I consider the highways, medical facilities, schools, industrial parks, and job initiatives that the ARC can count among its successes in Appalachia, I am reminded of those efforts that cannot be measured quantitatively but are hugely significant.

I speak particularly of the Appalachian Teaching Project (ATP)—a partnership between the ARC and institutions of higher education—which has been in place among the region's colleges and universities for fifteen years. The mission of the ATP is to engage students in a partnership with local communities that will

Dr. Randy Wykoff is the dean of the College of Public Health at East Tennessee State University.

For a half century, the Appalachian Regional Commission has played a major role in every aspect of Appalachian life.

Although only one of the ten "indicators" that led to the formation of the ARC was specifically related to health, we have increasingly come to understand that social factors such as education, economic opportunity, social equality, and culture are inexorably intertwined with health. Without advances in these areas, improvements in health are difficult to achieve. At the same time, without improvements in health, efforts to

Dr. Nina Gregg consults for a wide range of organizations.

Assumptions about how regional, national, and global economies function are disturbingly unreliable. Conventional economic development isn't certain to produce opportunity or result in equity. Economists, historians, and community groups have demonstrated that health disparities, income inequality, under-resourced public education, and environmental sustainability are systemic challenges, not regional distinctions that can be solved through integration into an unpredictable cycle of sectoral booms and busts.

In this turbulent context, people in Appalachian communities and around the world are discussing two questions: What

the region's jobs today and tomorrow, that is not supporting new entrepreneurial thinking and action.

ARC's strategic planning process identified emerging opportunities that, with investment, could become the region's new economic drivers. To accomplish that end, we need to make investment decisions that take into consideration the connections among education/workforce, economic opportunities, demographic renewal, and quality of life and place. We need to align and target investments by creating a shared understanding of what is working now in the region's economy and what interventions are needed to create a stronger set of outcomes. Common understanding and aligned action are keys to building a new economy in Appalachia and closing the gap between the region and the nation.

Supporting an equitable and sustainable economic transition in Appalachia must be the top investment priority for the public sector, private sector, and philanthropic community. And investments must be driven by a process that engages Appalachians in designing their future.

enhance the community and contribute to its sustainability. The students themselves may develop the outlines of the project and then find community agencies to work with them, or they may join an existing activity as student partners. For example, the Appalachian Arts and Studies in the Schools Program at Radford University pairs university students with high-school students who are college-able but not necessarily college-bound. The intent is to acquaint the secondary students with the benefits of higher education, to encourage them to pursue it, and to bring their acquired skills back to their home communities. This program and others in the ATP build leadership among university students who will in time become the region's advocates, planners, and entrepreneurs. The ATP programs promote sustainability in Appalachian communities by cultivating fruitful collaborations with local entities. The proven ATP, then, is one example of a small "seed-investment" in partnerships by the ARC that ultimately translates into cultural pride, growth opportunities, and economic vitality.

further advance these areas will be restrained.

The report acknowledges that the region is losing ground compared with the rest of the country in terms of health status. We must, therefore, work together to address specifically the health challenges facing the region. This requires more than just increasing access to healthcare (which is still needed in many parts of the region). It also requires us to focus on individual behaviors, such as smoking, lack of physical activity, unhealthy diets, and addiction. Perhaps, most importantly, it requires us to address the overall conditions in which people live—with a special focus on the challenges associated with living in small towns and isolated, rural communities where poor health outcomes will continue to prevent economic recovery and limit the overall quality of life, and where the social conditions will continue to limit the achievement of our health potential.

As an accomplished leader in the region, the ARC can play a vital role in bringing us all together around this critical issue.

kind of community, region, and future do we want? What kind of economy do we have to create for the community and future we want?

Momentum is building for a "just transition" that will require creative new approaches to ensuring community well-being. Values of environmental and community sustainability, equity, and shared prosperity call for a broader understanding of wealth creation and wealth control that goes beyond monetary income to include community ownership and multiple forms of wealth: intellectual, social, individual, built, natural, financial, political, and cultural. The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship urges "a systems approach to rural development that can restore, create, and maintain wealth in low-wealth rural areas by improving economies, the environment, and social conditions at the same time."

After decades of strategic investment in Appalachia, how can the Appalachian Regional Commission now use its leverage and resources to promote new policy and initiatives grounded in community control and designed for equitable outcomes and environmental sustainability?

Cultivating the Arts in Appalachia

Anne B. Pope

Tennessee Craft provides direct support to artists year-round through professional development, programming, and mentor opportunities. Photo courtesy Tennessee Craft.

I am certainly a product of Appalachia and of Tennessee. I wasn't born there, but as the saying goes, "I got there as quick as I could," moving from Fort Stewart, Georgia, where my father was stationed to Kingsport, Tennessee, when I was four years old.

Kingsport was a wonderful place to grow up; the town is nestled in the mountains, with a vibrant economic base, great schools and a strong sense of community. Kingsport was a part of a region with a rich arts and cultural footprint. As a child I saw plays at the Barter Theatre, heard Johnny and June Carter Cash at Carter Fold, and sat on hay bales listening to ghost stories at the Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough.

So, it was an honor when I became the tenth federal co-chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). ARC is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of the federal, state and local government. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, ARC is composed of the governors of the thirteen Appalachian states and a federal co-chair who is appointed by the president. Local participation is provided through multi-county local districts.

ARC has long made investments as part of a comprehensive economic development strategy, including safe and efficient highway systems, education, job-training, water and sewer systems, and health care programs in its mission to help the region reach socio-economic parity with the rest of the nation. The lack of any of these critical building blocks can be significant barriers to economic development and remain a critical component of the ARC's goals outlined in the ARC strategic plan 2016-2020.

One of the many advantages of serving as federal co-chair of ARC is the opportunity to travel throughout one of the most economically challenged and beautiful areas of the country. Over my seven years at ARC, from 2003-2010, I logged thousands of miles in every part of the region that runs from New York to Mississippi and covers some 205,000 square miles.

Wherever I went, I saw first-hand the tremendous needs that existed within Appalachia. I will never forget

one of my first visits, which was a dedication ceremony for a new water system providing clean, safe drinking water for the first time. After the ceremony, a woman handed me two Mason jars—one filled with brown, murky water from the old water system and the second filled with clear, clean water from the new system.

Yes, I would see the challenges communities faced, and they were significant, but invariably people also wanted to show us what was special or unique about their communities. Appalachia is rich in its natural, structural, and cultural assets, scenic mountains, rivers, forests, small towns, music, crafts, and cultural traditions.

So, just as a financial balance sheet has a liability and assets column, Appalachia does, too. While ARC had long focused much of its work on reducing the so-called liabilities or deficits of the region, we also began to look for additional strategies to help communities leverage their existing assets in new and sustainable ways.

Building on the successful entrepreneurship focus of my predecessor Jesse White, in 2005 we created an asset-based economic development initiative. Essential to the strategy was preserving a community's "seed corn" while at the same time promoting it for long-term sustainable growth.

Of course these types of strategies, whether called asset-based, place-based, or creative placemaking, have been around for decades. As I soon came to realize, some of the most important and successful asset-based initiatives and innovative leaders were located in Appalachia, and many involved the leveraging of cultural heritage, artistic talents, and traditions or so called "cultural assets." These cultural assets were being used to turn liabilities into revenue generators or as economic development strategies in their own right.

Handmade in America, the brainchild of Becky Anderson, started in Asheville, North Carolina. Becky, whose background was in economic development, used handmade crafts to establish an economic sector in western North Carolina, preserve cultures, and help revitalize some of the area's smallest communities. Handmade and Becky were masters in building partnerships and attracting private and public investment. One of her most innovative projects included the establishment of craft studio businesses powered by methane gas at closed landfills. Becky and Handmade's efforts have become models of how arts and culture can be used to help communities grow.

So, just as a financial balance sheet has a liability and assets column, Appalachia does, too.

Another notable example is the development of the Crooked Road Heritage Music Trail, which highlights the musical heritage of southwest Virginia by connecting and building upon existing music venues in the region. The Crooked Road, along with other creative investments, including the Round the Mountain Craft organization and the Heartwood Cultural Center, have helped make southwest Virginia a nationally recognized cultural and tourism destination.

Both of these examples and many others across Appalachia are successful when measured by traditional economic development methods including job creation and job retention, added per capita income, and tax revenue.

But it was the so-called "indirect" benefits of these arts and cultural investments that I came to realize were most compelling and perhaps even more important to the sustainability of the project and for the community in which it was located.

In these communities, particularly where a long-term investment view and a building-block process were used to connect with other community-wide initiatives, things began to happen—shuttered buildings were reopened, entire downtowns were spruced up, foot traffic and community pride increased. Traditions were preserved and former residents began moving back to find new activities that had been added for all to enjoy.

In a way, these cultural assets added to the sense of community, the sense of place, and in the process, became a part of the area's calling card or "brand," if you will. Examples include the floodwall murals in Paducah, Kentucky, and Portsmouth, Ohio; repurposing of old manufacturing facilities for arts work/living spaces in Oil City, Pennsylvania; the Mothman Festival in Point Pleasant, West Virginia; the work of the Overhill Historical Heritage Association in southeast Tennessee; and the International Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough.

And now as executive director of the Tennessee Arts Commission (TAC), I have shared these examples to help us in the creation of our own creative placemaking initiative. In the first year of the initiative, communities are using TAC funding to help revitalize neighborhoods, repurpose an old post office and train depot, and to enhance

The Early Days of Agriculture, one of the twenty-foot-tall panels in the two-thousand-foot-long Portsmouth, Ohio, floodwall portfolio by muralist Robert Dafford. Permission to reprint granted by Portsmouth Murals, Inc.

a farmer's market through the arts.

Established in 1967, the mission of the Tennessee Arts Commission is to cultivate the arts for the benefit of all Tennesseans and their communities. We do that through a variety of investments and programs.

Each year the Commission helps fund arts activities of more than 600 organizations and artists in Tennessee. Over the past five years, more than $30 million has been invested in schools and communities across the state. Arts education is a major focus of the Commission because it helps prepare students for success in school, work, and life. Through our student ticket subsidy program alone, approximately 600,000 students had arts experiences over the past five years.

The Commission has a unique relationship with the non-profit arts and cultural organizations that make up a key sector of Tennessee's creative economy. This year Tennessee is participating in the Americans for the Arts 2016 Arts and Economic Prosperity Study, a national study that measures the economic impact of non-profit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences. The Commission has partnered with twenty-five local arts councils, universities, local governments, as well as the nine local development districts. The study will be the largest and most comprehensive arts and cultural impact study ever done in Tennessee.

Cultivating the arts has never been more important. Art helps our communities grow, provides a more balanced education for our children, and connects us to the region we know as Appalachia.❖

Anne B. Pope is executive director of the Tennessee Arts Commission. She has served in various government roles including Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance and as tenth federal co-chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Hawks

Jesse Graves

Child of the hundred-year house,
house under the canopy, the overhang,
built before the chestnut blight,
Great Wars, Great Depression,
New Deal, and Trickle Down economics.
Nothing ever trickled down to us
except rain dripping off the tin roof.
Worms with black and yellow stripes
suctioned the catawba leaves clean,
and at their fattest, I shot them
with my pump action bb gun.
I chased everything that moved,
but did not want to kill most of them.
I lived in a valley named after
an old woman, Katy Myers,
so ancient my grandmother had only
heard stories about her.
Hawks scoured over the ridgeline,
dipping their sculpted wings,
watching me, keeping cold eyes
fixed on all I thought was mine.

Jesse Graves is the author of two collections of poetry, *Tennessee Landscape with Blighted Pine* (2011) and *Basin Ghosts* (2014). He won the 2015 James Still Award for Writing about the Appalachian South from the Fellowship of Southern Writers.

Traditional Dance in Kentucky:
Settlement Schools and Beyond

Susan Eike Spalding

Charlie Whitaker calling a square dance at Carcassonne Community Center, 1999. Photo by Layla Thomas.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, only two places in eastern Kentucky offered the opportunity to participate in old time square dancing on a regular basis. Coincidentally, key leaders at both venues were products of 1940s settlement school dance programs that focused on English country dance. Richard Jett, leader of the dances at Natural Bridge State Park (Powell County) and Charlie Whitaker, caller at the Carcassonne Square Dance (Letcher County) attended Highland Institute and Stuart Robinson respectively, dancing with folk dance teams. Decades later, they and their communities had returned to local traditional dance, but their dance events benefitted from the leadership skills and the beliefs about the value of dance honed in their youth.

In the early 1900s, square dancing was still an exciting and relatively new form of recreation in eastern Kentucky (Brashear and Fields Interviews, East Kentucky Folk Dance Collection, Berea College). It remained widely popular until World War II, with dances taking place primarily in people's homes. Stories were frequently told of corn-shuckings and house-raisings accompanied by dancing and music. In the early years of that century, settlement schools were established by churches or other organizations to bring modern education to communities in the Appalachian mountains. The schools came to be linked within a network created by the Council of the Southern Mountains (CSM). CSM drew on progressive ideals and contemporary best practices, sharing them with settlement school staff in frequent conferences.

Early scholars such as Jane Addams, G. Stanley Hall, and Joseph Lee noted that recreation was seen as central to the development of the individual and the community and was endorsed by psychologists, educators, physical educators, and even President Theodore Roosevelt. Recreation, and especially dance, was believed to contribute to health and good citizenship, as well as to self-confidence and personal presentation. Melvin Ballou Gilbert wrote in 1903, "Dancing is to the body what reading is to the mind," and "freedom lies in the recognition and joyful acceptance of relationships." English country dance was promoted at the settlement schools to accomplish these goals, because it involved children dancing with partners, and moving in set patterns within larger groups to the strains of melodic musical phrases. In 1904 Hall wrote that "Right dancing can cadence the very soul, give nervous poise and control, bring harmony between … body and mind. It can … pre-dispose the heart against vice, and turn the springs of character toward virtue."

Pine Mountain Settlement School, founded in 1913, led the way in incorporating dance into education. At first the staff simply welcomed their local community to the school to "run sets," as their neighbors referred to square dancing. After Cecil Sharp's 1917 visit, English country dancing was enthusiastically incorporated into their curriculum and highlighted their May Day festivals. For the next thirty years, specialists came in to teach the English dances at settlement schools, believing they were reintroducing the students to their rightful cultural heritage. The English "songs and dances are not foreign importations, but a vital part of the traditional culture of America" ("Notes from Pine Mountain Settlement School").

By the 1940s, when Richard Jett was in high school at Highland Institute and Charlie Whitaker at Stuart Robinson, CSM had established the Mountain Folk Festival to bring together students from settlement schools all over the mountains. Each spring, hundreds of students practiced a particular syllabus of English, Danish, and American folk dances, and travelled to Berea College for "the joy which comes from doing games (dances) together" ("Folk Festival Plans," *Mountain Life and Work*). Through this experience they learned the value of working together in a team to perfect a dance for performance and experienced the attendant development of interpersonal skills and self-confidence.

Both Whitaker and Jett had grown up in communities where square dancing was enjoyed. Whitaker observed dancing in Carcassonne, but did not participate, because his father disapproved. Jett, on the other hand, reminisced, "My first experience in mountain dancing was in the home of Carrie McIntosh near the mouth of Puncheon Creek, Breathitt County, Kentucky, when I was a boy. The neighbors and young folks of that area would get together in her home once or twice each week and enjoy the fun of dancing such old-time figures as the Wild Goose Chase, Old Side Door or Grapevine Twist" (Jett and Staley, *Square Dancing in the Mountains of Eastern Kentucky*). As young adults, Jett and Whitaker both became teachers and chose to lead dance from the outset of their careers, crediting their passion to their settlement school experience. Each took a somewhat different approach.

Richard Jett's focus was always the square dancing he had enjoyed in his youth, coupled with the values he had learned at Highland. He believed that dancing created the self-esteem in young people that helped them to succeed in school and work, and that the cooperative interaction among dancers helped to solidify the community. He gathered local callers and organized square dances at his school and formed clogging teams, beginning with his "Mountain Shufflers," who took first place at the Kentucky State Fair in 1958. Within a few years, he took over direction of the dancing at Natural Bridge State Resort Park. Dancing had taken place at Natural Bridge for many years, and Richard Jett expanded it, increasing attendance and hosting several annual festivals. He brought in local musicians, called square dances, and encouraged freestyle clogging. Every Friday and Saturday night throughout the summer, the dance pavilion he dubbed Hoedown Island was packed with hundreds of local residents from several counties and with visitors to the park from all over the country.

By 1970, he had broadened the repertoire of dances in order to provide variety. He included versions of folk dances he had learned at Highland, like Circle Waltz Mixer, Patty Cake Polka, and Ninepin Reel, and added the Hokey Pokey for small children. Regulars and visitors flocked to the dance floor for these, just as they did for square dances and freestyle clogging. When Jett called Appalachian square dances and invited freestyle clogging, he always emphasized their place in Appalachian heritage. One of his goals was "to help preserve and perpetuate the square dancing customs and traditions of yesteryear and to permit today's generation to learn and enjoy some of the dances and games" (Jett and Staley, *Square Dancing*). Though Jett had enjoyed folk dancing at Highland Institute, his heart remained with the Appalachian traditions he had known as a child. His team dancing experience prepared him for a lifetime of leading large scale dance events, and forming and promoting teams. He promoted the values of good citizenship, responsibility, and appropriate manners he had associated with dance in his youth. In 2005, he was awarded the Sarah Gertrude Knott Award for lifetime achievement in the traditional arts from the Kentucky Folklife Program. Richard Jett passed away in 2006, and the dances continue to the present under the direction of Jane Bolen.

Charlie Whitaker's focus, as a young teacher at Pine Mountain Settlement School and later at Alice Lloyd College, was on the English country dances from his Stuart Robinson days, with the addition of international folk dances learned at Peabody Institute. He took students each year to the Mountain Folk Festival, and participated in the monthly CSM leadership training sessions held at Hindman, Berea, Pine Mountain, Somerset, and other schools and colleges in eastern Kentucky. At these events he learned more dances to share with his students. In the 1980s, he began

calling square dances at Carcassonne Community Center, where they had begun spontaneously in 1967 under the leadership of Clifton and Ruby Caudill. (Whitaker, "Biography" for Kentucky Folklife Festival, September 15-17, 2005). The Center had formerly been one of the buildings of Carcassonne School, part of the settlement school network. It offered a homey atmosphere where fifty to seventy-five people gathered one Saturday night a month to dance, socialize, and discuss community affairs.

As a caller at Carcassonne, Whitaker attempted to introduce dances from his folk dance background, and taught them in workshops in surrounding counties. Many of the participants had, like him, grown up in settlement school dance programs, but the community of dancers prevailed in its preference for square dancing in their own local style. He did introduce the Virginia Reel, and it became a staple of the Carcassonne square dance evenings. But dancers there said that they preferred doing the "big circle dances" because they were simple and not strenuous, and it didn't matter if people made mistakes (Henrikson Interview, September 14, 2002). Whitaker was successful in establishing one stylistic change. He introduced a buzz step swing as used in some folk dances. In the local tradition, a man and woman, in casual ballroom position, walked easily around each other for the swing. By the 1990s, most dancers responded energetically when Whitaker called out "buzz!"

Though Whitaker was more aligned personally with his folk dance education, he adopted the local structure and style of the square dance when he called. He was committed to dance as recreation, and worked continually to establish square dances in surrounding communities. His experience with Mountain Folk Festival teams prepared him to lead Carcassonne groups to perform at the 2003 Smithsonian Folklife Festival and at several Kentucky Folklife Festivals. Charlie Whitaker passed away in 2009, and monthly dances continued at Carcassonne until 2015.

Gathering Peascods, an English Country Dance, enjoyed at Pine Mountain and other settlement schools. Photo from Angela Melvin Album II, Part III. Pine Mountain Settlement School, Pine Mountain, Kentucky. Photo courtesy the author.

Teachers at the settlement schools of both Charlie Whitaker's and Richard Jett's youth believed that they were cultivating a new dance tradition in the Kentucky mountains. According to David Whisnant, these teachers were convinced that English and Danish folk dances, "brought in mainly to serve as a bridge to the traditions of the people ... have become ... traditions in their own right; and they are on their way to being incorporated into the Southern Mountain dance form." Though this prediction did not come to pass, the network of settlement schools, through their emphasis on dance and their training of leaders, contributed significantly to the perpetuation of local dance traditions at Carcassonne and Natural Bridge. The dance programs at Stuart Robinson and Highland schools had instilled in Whitaker and Jett not only leadership ability, but also an understanding of dance as a tool to strengthen community and to build character and confidence. Both men drew on these skills and convictions as they helped to cultivate square dance and clogging traditions in their own communities. ❖

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Susan Eike Spalding has served as a consultant for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, co-produced Appalshop video documentaries on dance, and edited dance entries for the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*. Her book *Appalachian Dance* received the 2014 Weatherford Award for Non-fiction.

Challenging the Digital Divide:
Cultivating Technology in Appalachian Communities

Tim Ezzell

The Mount Zion Drive-in, Calhoun County, West Virginia. Photo by Bob Weaver, courtesy the *Hur Herald*. Digital frame manipulation by *N&T* staff.

Hur is a small community located deep in Calhoun County, West Virginia. At its heyday, Hur was home to about fifty residents. Today only a handful of people still reside there. It is a small community in the fourth least populous county in the state. It is also home to the *Hur Herald*, a self-described "questionable publication" that has reported news from the small rural county in an online format since 1999. Despite being published from such an obscure and remote community, the *Hur Herald* boasts a surprisingly large readership. In 2015 the online publication received more than 2.5 million web visits. In December alone, more than 80,000 readers visited the *Herald's* website, more than double the number of visitors to the website of the West Virginia Legislature during the same month. They went to the *Herald* to read stories such as "Ninety-year-old Cleo Newell of Orma Would Appreciate a Birthday Card" and "Calhoun School Board Selling Old Buses with Bidding." Over the years the publication has attracted a devoted following from readers drawn to the news of a rural, close-knit community. As one Manhattanite remarked, "I dream of a quieter place. I look at the photos and read the stories about life in that slow-lane, a county without a stoplight, and imagine how much I would like to live there."

About three miles from Hur is another small community, Mount Zion, home to the Mount Zion Drive-in. The Drive-in, opened in 1950, is the only movie theater in Calhoun County and the sole county attraction listed in the extensive Explorer's Guide to the Mountaineer State. Yet, sadly, the Mount Zion Drive-in has not shown a movie since 2014—the year that studios went digital. Today, studios no longer distribute movies on film, and the operators of the Drive-in lack the $75,000 needed to upgrade to digital equipment. As a result, a third generation local business now sits idle while local residents have to drive forty minutes to see a recently-released movie.

These contrasting stories from Calhoun County illustrate, in vivid terms, the promise and pitfalls associated

with technological advances in Appalachia. On the one hand, new technologies create opportunities to change the region's landscape and challenge lingering perceptions and barriers. Hur, while remote, is no longer isolated. Digital products and services can now be sold throughout the world. Online services such as Etsy and eBay have created a global marketplace for Appalachian businesses and artisans. Telemedicine can bring world class care to even the smallest hospitals, and rural schools can be linked to universities and libraries across the planet.

At the same time, however, formidable barriers deter technological progress in the region. America's rural broadband speeds are among the slowest in the developed world, and many residents still rely on dial-up services. According to the FCC's Annual Progress Report, over half of rural Americans lack access to competitive broadband speeds, including 100% of Calhoun County. Appalachian schools sometimes lack cutting-edge equipment, and digital literacy, particularly among older residents, continues to lag behind other areas. Cost barriers, such as those found in Mount Zion, are also a persistent issue, and perceptions about the region limit progress. Many believe that Appalachian communities cannot embrace technologies or would benefit little from improvements. Still others may view advances in technology as a threat to Appalachian culture or regional identity and distinctiveness.

Given these barriers, how do we—working as advocates for our communities—cultivate new and emerging technologies across Appalachia? How can we extend twenty-first century communications, media, and skills across this vast and diverse region while still maintaining the character of "a quieter place?" The answers to these questions lie in changed priorities and perceptions.

First, improvements in rural digital infrastructure must become a national priority. The past two decades have changed the nature of Appalachian isolation. While physical isolation has improved significantly, today's residents now confront an era of digital isolation. This is especially true of the region's youth, who often find themselves unable to download music, stream media, or game online. Isolated from mass culture and opportunities, it is little wonder that so many seek a future outside of the region.

To remedy this, we must make a national commitment to affordable and equitable broadband access. Just as our nation extended electrical power to rural areas in the 1930s and phone service in later years, we must now acknowledge high-speed internet as a necessity, not a luxury, and classify broadband as a public utility. Unfortunately, industry influence and political barriers are preventing this transformation in many parts of the region. Residents of Morristown, Tennessee, for example, have access to some of the fastest internet speeds in the region. Yet, while the local utility's fiber optic network can deliver internet speeds of up to one gigabit per second to over 400,000 potential customers, its service is limited to 6,000 users due to legal constraints.

Secondly, as we improve the region's digital infrastructure, we must also develop the skills and capacity of residents to use these resources. Investments must be made in schools and workforce development programs to prepare the region for new jobs and careers. 3D printing for example, has the potential to revolutionize affordable rural housing. Within the next decade or so, printed homes will be available that offer increased safety, energy efficiency, and value for less than the cost of a manufactured home. Unfortunately, only a handful of rural schools currently have access to the technology necessary to teach the skills and help develop this nascent industry within the region.

Lastly, we must also change our perceptions of the region, its culture, and its potential. All too often we view Appalachia in static terms, as if change cannot or should not happen. Appalachian culture is viewed as sacrosanct, and regional limitations are sometimes defended or even celebrated. New technologies may be viewed as erosive, as if exposure to mass culture leads to the demise of regional distinctiveness. While these views are held out of respect for Appalachia and its people, they restrict the region's ability to adapt to new opportunities and embrace new forms of expression.

To that end, we must reject standards of cultural authenticity and, instead, embrace an adaptive and opportunistic approach. We should play traditional music on 3D printed instruments, develop software to design quilts, and promote our communities and culture using virtual reality. Cultivating technology plants the seeds for regional growth and holds the promise of a better and more sustainable future for Appalachia.❖

Dr. Tim Ezzell is a research scientist in the Political Science department at the University of Tennessee, where he also teaches courses in community planning and Appalachian policy and development. He also serves as chair of the newly formed Community of Appalachian Scholars at UT.

A Different Kind of Garden

Mike Feely

Henderson Settlement's youth hand chime group performs. Photo courtesy the author.

"Hey Mike, hey Mike" came the voice from down the school hall. I looked up to see a third-grade boy trying to catch my attention. "Are you going to be at youth group?" "I plan to be," I replied. "Good, we're playing hand chimes Wednesday!" I turn the corner, and run into another young man, a fifth grader. "Hey Mike, are you playing hand chimes with us next week?" "Sure, sure," I said. "See you then!" It was Dr. Seuss' Birthday week at our neighboring school, and I had walked across the parking lot to spend an hour or so on that Friday as a community reader for a couple of classes. I love Dr. Seuss books, and love getting a classroom of kids stirred up with my fast-paced reading of *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish* and *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* A lot of the students were dressed for the occasion, and my three classrooms all had a few Cats in the Hat in attendance and a sprinkling of Thing Ones and Thing Twos. There was even a Cindy Lou Who. It was an afternoon that reinforced my life-long belief in the power of books and music and art to make a difference in the life of a child.

But hand chimes? Who would have thought?

Henderson Settlement has been around since 1925, and was originally started as a school and mountain mission for the children of the Lower Laurel Fork Valley in Bell and Whitley counties in southeast Kentucky. There were thirteen students in that first class held in a converted cow-shed (with a Methodist deaconess named Bertha Riel as their first teacher). All thirteen students graduated, and most of that class went on to some kind of college or further training, and even more importantly, came back to the area to serve as teachers or nurses. That pattern continued for fifty years as local students attended the Henderson Settlement school and then headed off to study at Berea, Union College (Kentucky), Lincoln Memorial University, Hiwassee College, University of the Cumberlands, and other schools—and then in many cases came back to work in the community. In 1970 Bell County took over the operations of the local school, and a few years later the high school was merged into a comprehensive county-wide high school forty-five minutes away in the county seat of Pineville. The local school is now called the Frakes School Center, and has close to 160 students, grades pre-kindergarten through eight. Henderson Settlement shares a driveway with the school and takes pride in maintaining a pretty good partnership. We work with the students in a daily after-school program and a summer recreation program, and send volunteers to help with tutoring, reading, and other activities.

Like a lot of schools across the Appalachians, Frakes School has its own struggles with student achievement and resources. As a result of those struggles, coupled with

national and state priorities, there is emphasis on making sure that the students stay focused on reading and math, and to a lesser extent on science. Much of the funding for programs (both private and public) has likewise leaned toward these priorities. Some of the biggest funders in these mountains (and there weren't that many to begin with) have pulled back from funding youth programs and after-school programs. Arts and music funding has been declining across the region, most noticeably in our inner-city and rural school systems.

We had been pondering these trends the last couple of years, and watching band and music programs get smaller, and even disappear. It's a particular paradox for southern Appalachia—in an area known (and advertised) for music and stories we were cutting funds for those very things. So we brainstormed, and talked and came up with different ideas. We collected musical instruments for a band (we now have twenty woodwind and brass instruments at Henderson Settlement waiting for a teacher). We talked about a musical series and starting some concerts. We emailed one of our local colleges about bringing in its community band to play at Frakes (until the director left to take a job elsewhere). We explored some traditional music programs.

But then a couple of things happened. One of the musically-minded folks on our staff came to me and said "I've got an idea. Let's start a hand chime group with the kids." I'd been thinking of concert bands, bluegrass groups, and jazz quartets. Hand chimes? Who would fund something like that? As it turned out, there were some churches and smaller donors that were glad to do so. And, somewhat to my surprise, when the idea was presented to the youth, it was enthusiastically received.

When the hand chimes arrived in October, the first set of after-school practices was pretty interesting. The kids were excited about the new chimes (new instruments were themselves a pretty cool thing), but learning to play together, with the measured precision required of chimes and bells, presented a challenge. Practices every Wednesday were enthusiastic, energetic and tiring (at least for the hand chime teacher, who had her hands full). We worried about the kids losing interest, or the techniques being too hard, and the particular difficulties of playing as part of a group, rather than as an individual.

Rather than losing interest, the kids found more interest with each practice. Practices were still energetic, but the students began to see themselves as part of a group with a purpose, and the teacher coached them along. They focused on the one song they'd play for the Christmas party, "Angels from the Realms of Glory," and kept at it once or twice a week after school.

And when we gathered for the community Christmas party on December 4, the kids knocked it out of the park. All three hundred people sat and listened as these kids showed off what they could do together.

They took a few weeks off for the Christmas break, and now are again practicing every week on a couple more songs. It is pretty cool to be part of the hand chime group. Cool enough to want to invite your friends to hear you play.

We have a lot of great programs at Henderson Settlement and have been doing a lot of good work since 1925, but if you ask any of our youth what we do—they will tell you that we have a hand chime group—this is something that we do.

I'm under no illusions about the challenges of southern Appalachia. Will hand chimes change Appalachia? Will our area be saved by professional touring hand chime groups? Probably not, but I'm still hopeful. The reality is that our youth and students do need higher math skills, literacy, STEM programs, and gardens to be able to compete in our new economies. But they also need ways to thrive, to create, to dream, to cultivate the mind and spirit. There's more than one way to grow Appalachia and Appalachians. Growing Appalachia will take gardens, community development . . . and even hand chimes. ❖

Originally from Lookout Mountain, Georgia, Mike Feely is on staff at the Henderson Settlement in Frakes, Kentucky. He is a longtime advocate for arts and for kids, and plays the trombone in a few jazz bands.

Bad Transmission

Alice Beecher

west virginia smells like
wet tobacco and the howling
eyeliner of highways
on a stiff october evening.

the stars shine brighter
than the fluorescent teeth
of the oak hill gas station

where I broke down
(car asthmatic, tears whittling
a half-hearted cross
down my cheekbone)

and had no help
but a slack-jawed coal truck
and an old man named zippy,
who told clean jokes

and shoveled air into my tires,
smiled under the wrinkle of his cigarette,
under the soft exhales of diesel fumes
and the memories that sat in his belly like hailstones.

(of his daughters across the shenandoah,
of what this town was once,
when we left our doors unlocked,
when the junkies didn't go so hungry-eyed,
when the mountains didn't wheeze so hard)

"transmission's dead" he said
and bought me pop and pall malls,
muttered against the aging twilight.

the normality of pain is enormous,
is plain and present as the dust settling
against the neon lights of november.

cars lose their will to keep
rolling. an 18-wheeler spins out
on I-64 and three men are dead,
their ghosts nowhere to be found.
the tomatoes rot. the mountain loses her hair
and I lose my lovers quick as the carrot flower
spreads her seeds.

it is dark out. there are strangers holding my hand
as my car stutters past the end of the universe.

the gods whisper to the gorgeousness of our smallness,
of our long eyes staring proudly against the highways.

there are no
strangers here.

Alice Beecher is currently an AmeriCorps member with High Rocks Educational Corporation, a youth empowerment organization that serves students in Pocahontas, Nicholas, and Greenbrier Counties in West Virginia.

Cultivating Persons

Loyal Jones

I've never thought I was smart enough to do much in the world, but I did have one gift from somewhere that enabled me to know smart, when I saw it in others. I don't mean just smart, but talented and knowing, wise and caring. This may sound like false modesty, but I do hold humility and modesty high on my list of values. Looking back on my efforts in the field of Appalachian Studies, I've had some successes primarily because of the people I knew or had learned about who knew more about life in the region than I did.

I was involved in two projects at Berea College that depended on the smarts and knowledge of a lot of other people. The first was the Workshop in Appalachian Studies that I ran for some twenty years. Berea history professor Dr. Richard Drake was the one who came up with the idea, he who had taught the first college course in Appalachian history and had prepared a syllabus for it, later to be published by the University Press of Kentucky as *A History of Appalachia*.

We were well aware that most of the high schools in the region taught courses in state history but with little emphasis on Appalachia as a region, nor was there much if any emphasis on the literature about Appalachian people. Most of the regional colleges and universities also had not offered courses about the region. Our main idea was to provide a summer workshop that would prepare teachers to offer courses on Appalachian history or literature or else to provide an emphasis on Appalachia in their regular courses.

When Richard and I got together with President Willis D. Weatherford, the first thing he said was, "If we do this, we must get the very best teachers we can find." He also said that we should explore the possibility of graduate credit at the University of Kentucky. He promptly made an appointment with Lewis Cochran, Dean of the Graduate School, and Vice President A. D. Albright at the University of Kentucky, and we arranged with them for graduate credit.

Then it became my job to carry out his first requirement of getting "the very best teachers we can find." We already had Professor Drake for the history course, and we approached Dr. Pat Wear of the Berea Education Department, who had taught a generation of mountain students who were already teaching all over the region. Dr. Wear had also supervised the Berea College School Improvement Project financed by a Ford Foundation grant

Loyal Jones. Photo courtesy the author.

that involved thirty-eight rural Kentucky schools and some 5,000 students. His job would be to help the workshop participants prepare course outlines and syllabi and other teaching materials.

Then we secured Appalachian novelist, biographer, and historian Wilma Dykeman to teach the literature portion of the workshop. Born in Asheville, she was author of eighteen books. She was later to become a professor of literature at the University of Tennessee. Her lectures on Appalachian writers were brilliant.

However, I felt that we ought to have a good many additional resource persons to share what they knew about the region and its people. So, I made a list of some of the people I most admired and had learned from and invited them to come for a day or two to teach. The first to be asked was Cratis Williams, a native of eastern Kentucky, Professor of English and Dean of the Graduate School at Appalachian State University. His prize-winning, 1,661-page doctoral dissertation, *The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction*, analyzed almost everything that had been published on Appalachian people from Colonial times to the 1950s. Although Cratis thought that his work was documenting a vanishing culture, it became a foundation for Appalachian Studies. Cratis was a charming lecturer, an Appalachian linguist, a ballad singer, and teller of wonderful jokes and tales.

Other notable speakers and lecturers in these workshops were:

Jim Wayne Miller: Gifted poet, fiction writer, and essayist, whose published work included ten volumes of

poetry (including the iconic *Brier, His Book* and *The Brier Poems*) and two novels (*Newfound* and *His First Best Country*).

Ron D. Eller: Professor of History and Director of the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky, and author of *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930.*

Alan DeYoung: Professor of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Kentucky, whose research interests were rural schools and the sociology, politics, and economics of educational change in rural America.

Gurney Norman: Author of *Divine Right's Trip* and *Kinfolks*, and teacher of a host of writing students in the English department of the University of Kentucky. He was also writer and host of television documentaries produced by Kentucky Educational Television.

Leonard W. Roberts: English Professor, folklorist at Pikeville College, gifted teller of the Old World folk tales he had collected, and compiler of such books as *South from Hell-Fer-Sartin*.

Harry M. Caudill: Attorney, historian, and author of *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* and other major works that had a strong effect on public thinking and helped bring about the Appalachian Regional Commission and the War on Poverty.

Theda Perdue: Professor of History at the University of North Carolina, authority on the Native people of the Southeastern United States, and author of *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears.*

James Stokely: Poet, husband of Wilma Dykeman, and her co-researcher and co-writer. He gave a splendid lecture in the Workshop on his friendship with Thomas Wolfe, just three days before he died of a heart attack. It was Wolfe's sister, Mabel Wolfe Wheaton, who introduced James Stokely to Wilma Dykeman.

For four summers, we also offered "Appalachian Music" as a part of this workshop and invited the following authorities to teach:

Bill C. Malone: Professor of History at Tulane University and author of *Country Music, U.S.A.*, the first authoritative scholarly work on the subject.

Jean Ritchie: Called the "Mother of Folk," with some thirty-five musical albums to her credit plus *Singing Family of the Cumberlands* and other works.

Charles K. Wolfe: Professor of English at Middle Tennessee State University and author of such books as *Tennessee Strings: The Story of Country Music in Tennessee.*

Lily May Ledford: Singer, banjoist, guitarist, fiddler, star of Chicago's WLS *National Barn Dance*, and member of the first all-woman band (the Coon Creek Girls) on Cincinnati's WLS *Boone County Jamboree* and Kentucky's *Renfro Valley Barn Dance*. She was posthumously awarded the National Folk Heritage Award.

This workshop attracted a wide variety of people, not just public school teachers but also scholars, writers, college professors, librarians, and school administrators, and they turned out to be interesting and gifted personalities, some who became leaders in Appalachian Studies, such as Grace Edwards at Radford University; Steve Fisher at Emory & Henry College; Philip Obermiller, independent scholar; James Gifford, of Morehead State University and later the Jesse Stuart Foundation; Rodger Cunningham, Alice Lloyd College; and Tom Boyd at Berea College. Several others went on to earn graduate degrees at the University of Kentucky or other institutions.

The second event where I encountered greatness in personality was at a symposium on rural hymnody at Berea College in 1979. When William H. Tallmadge, music professor and musicologist, retired from the University College of Buffalo, he came to eastern Kentucky to study the monophonic and heterophonic hymnody of Primitive, Old Regular, and United Baptists, and he ended up teaching another decade in the music department of Berea College. One of the first things he proposed was a symposium on rural hymnody. I readily agreed to help him with this project. It turned out that Tallmadge knew just about all of the leading folklorists, musicologists, and hymnodists in the United States. We secured a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Tallmadge got most of the experts whom he knew to be on the program: Daniel Patterson from the University of North Carolina; Nicholas Temperley, University of Illinois; Terry Miller, Kent State University; Jeff Todd Titon, Tufts University; Arthur Schroeder, Old Sturbridge Village; Allen Buechner, Queens College; Portia Maultsby, Indiana University; Dorothy Horne, Butler University; James Downey, William Carey College; Harlan Daniel, Chicago; Phillip Rhodes, Carleton College; and Archie Green, Woodrow Wilson Center, Smithsonian Institution. Tallmadge also got singers from groups he had studied: Old Regular Baptists demonstrating lined-out hymnody, the Phipps Family with gospel singing, and the African-American Wiregrass Shape-Note Singers from Alabama. More than a hundred scholars and others attended this event.

As a result of this symposium, we arranged for Jeff Titon, then head of the ethnomusicology program at Brown University, to return to Berea as a visiting professor. He enlisted John Wallhausser, Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Berea College, with his knowledge of Old Regulars, and Elder Elwood Cornett, Distinguished Educator with the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (as well as Moderator of the Indian Bottom Association of Old Regular Baptists) to join him in doing a documentary recording of the music of the Indian Bottom churches. This was released in 1997, *Old Regular*

Baptists: Lined-out Hymondy from Eastern Kentucky (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings). In 2003, Smithsonian Folkways released another CD from the same recordings, *Songs of the Old Regular Baptists: Lined-Out Hymnody From Southeastern Kentucky, Vol. 2.*

In 2015, when James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress, announced the latest list of recordings to be added to the library's National Recording Registry, Titon's, Wallhausser 's and Cornett 's recordings were among the twenty-five chosen.

In 1972, I wrote an article, "Appalachian Values" for Leonard Roberts' *Twigs* magazine at Pikeville College. Later in 1995, it was published by the Jesse Stuart Foundation as a book, illustrated with the great photographs of Warren Brunner. I don't claim any originality for these values. I got them from observation, discussions, and reading the work of others, but I think they were meaningful to earlier Appalachians and perhaps to other "country people" as well. In the rural culture that I was born into, the family, relatives, neighbors, church members, and teachers, were of topmost importance in our lives, and we knew just about everything about them. They were persons—personages—notable for their individuality.

I believe that this value of personalism is eroding today. When I first entered Berea College in 1950, all the students (most from farms and mining towns), made eye contact, smiled, and uttered a greeting when I met them on the sidewalk. Today, at the same Appalachian College, fewer than half do. I usually invade their assumed privacy with a greeting. Some acknowledge me, but others do not. From my old culture, to be ignored is the worst insult. When I go down Main Street, I scrutize each face, fearing that I might ignore someone I know.

Perhaps we could blame this impersonalization on the digital world that has been thrust upon us. Some students are looking at their smart phones as they walk or have hearing buds in their ears. When they visit the local coffee shop, each is carrying a digital device, and when they sit together, they are often absorbed with it rather than with each other. There are many benefits from the digital world, and I make use of them, but I wonder if the devices aren't becoming more important to many of us than the person with whom we may be communicating.

But I don't want to lay this impersonality on just the young people. I see the same trend with adults, and I perceive that some older professional people don't seem to know much about the persons with whom they work beyond the abilities for which they were hired. I feel that I have come through a very personal era into an impersonal one. My efforts in Appalachian studies have been vastly enriched by the people I have known and have relied on in my work—from the fiddlers and ballad singers and tale tellers, whom I have loved, to the scholars and others. The scholars particularly have been among the most generous people I have known, and I've enjoyed many a conversation with them.

A gentle modesty and a sincere sense of humility were primary values in my old culture, even though it no doubt hindered some people in their achievement, and it too is diminishing in our time, especially in the biographical resumes contrived to sell ourselves to employers. David Brooks, *New York Times* columnist and social critic, makes it plain in his recent book *The Road to Character* that the current populace could benefit from more humility. He profiles some of his admired people who overcame personal problems, subdued their own egos, and found moral commitments that required the imagination and efforts of others. I highly recommend this book.

So, in "Cultivating Appalachia" let's be careful about weeding out the old values that made this place and culture so fascinating, both here and throughout the country. This personalism, which has embedded within it a sense of humility as well as equality and mutual respect, has allowed for delightful interchanges through the years. Doug Wallin, the best unaccompanied ballad singer I ever heard, called me early one morning and said, "Loyal?" I said, "Yeah?" He said, "It's good to hear your voice; I heard you died." I assured him that his news was premature, but I felt great all week being reminded that I was still alive and talking with a friend like Doug who took the time to investigate a rumor about me. Doug is gone now, but I remember him fondly, as I do others, also gone, such as Wilma Dykeman, Cratis Williams, Jim Wayne Miller, and Leonard Roberts. I am grateful for all they did to enhance projects that I held dear, and I still treasure all the things they taught me and all the jokes and stories that we exchanged.

Values, like other things, are bartered; we rearrange their ranking order throughout our lives, but we must be mighty careful not to make bad trades.❖

Loyal Jones is the former director of the Appalachian Center (1970-1993) at Berea College. He is the author of nine books and recipient of numerous awards.

Legacy

Catherine Pritchard Childress

I slipped the rings from her fingers every Sunday
when the sermon went too long, placed them on my own,
counted 66 glinting flakes in the cluster
she called a snowball, admired her engagement ring,
the center of a diamond-petaled daisy—
and the row of jewels that made her someone's wife,
its white-gold band wearing thin.

Some days she cached them in a velvet-lined box,
traded luxury for function—gloves protecting her
manicure from soil and pebbles placed
in the bottom of small pots of African violets,
as we separated delicate roots
of *Allison's Laughter, Austen's Love.*

"Three rings for three granddaughters," she said,
plucking each from its slot. I envied the oldest cousin's
claiming the icy cluster, my older sister's picking
that bright flower for her own jewelry box,
leaving me this simple band I wear to remember
the girl whose left hand sparkled on Sunday
mornings, and the boy she dreamed
when she looked at her tiny finger shining with diamonds—
instead of this woman with aging hands
wearing her grandmother's broken band
beside her own row of stones.

Catherine Pritchard Childress lives in east Tennessee where she teaches writing and literature at East Tennessee State University and Northeast State Community College.

An Interview from Harlan County

Featuring Robert Gipe, Austin Rutherford, Marissa Rutherford, and Noah Hughes

A scene from *Higher Ground 3: Talking Dirt*. Photo by Chris Jones.

On March 1, 2016, students Austin Rutherford, Marissa Rutherford, and Noah Hughes held a conversation with their instructor, Robert Gipe, about the history of the Higher Ground Community Performance Project in Harlan County, Kentucky. Higher Ground, a program cultivated by the Appalachian Center at Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College, has generated five plays and a variety of programs and events, including public art, art and music festivals, and a conference about the future called "It's Good To Be Young in the Mountains."

AR: Tell us a little bit about what Higher Ground is.

RG: Higher Ground is a community organization in Harlan County, Kentucky, made up of people of all ages: children of three, four, and five years old; people in their seventies and eighties; and all kinds of folks in between. We have had black folks and white folks; people with plenty of money and plenty of people with not enough money. We have had people from Clover Fork and Poor Fork; people from across the mountain in Martin's Fork; and from down the Cumberland River. We do a particular kind of theater based on oral histories collected in a community, usually by people in the community. Then those oral histories go to a playwright—someone like the late Johnson City native Jo Carson—to write it. In our last couple of plays we have done most of the writing ourselves. Then you need directors for the play and the music. We've worked with Jerry Stropnicky, Robert "Bobby B" Martin, Richard Geer, Ann Schertz, and student directors, such as Austin Rutherford, Daven Creech, and Justin Taylor. The cast has ranged from fifty to eighty depending on the play.

The first play, *Higher Ground*, came out in 2005 and centered on the prescription drug abuse crisis—which was really new and really scary. We were having a lot of overdoses, a lot of drug-related crime in the community, so

that first play looked at flood stories, because we also have a lot of floods in Harlan County. We wove together stories about floods and stories about our community being flooded by pills. This was Jo Carson's great idea, that in a flood time people come together—regardless of how rich or poor they are, regardless of where they live—to make sure that other people do not get washed away in the flood. The play asks the question, "Why don't we deal with the flood of pills the way we do with our water floods? Why don't we help each other out and make sure that nobody gets 'washed away' in the flood of prescription drugs?" Al Nunez played the doctor, and that was right after a doctor in our community had been convicted of overprescribing drugs, so it really hit home with a lot of people.

We continued the first *Higher Ground* in 2006 and did not realize we were going to do the second play, but everybody was really into it. So, instead of looking at the drugs, which is something that came down on us from nowhere, we looked more closely at personal accountability. Noah what do you remember about the second play, in 2009?

NH: *Playing with Fire* centered on a house fire. One of the main threads in the story was two sisters—one was abusing drugs and running wild, and the other was trying to figure out how to take care of her inside the family bond. There were other light-hearted stories about mining, the pranks that were pulled underground, and how they built community there by just joking around and having fun. There was also a story about a boss going back to save some men in a mining incident; that was one of the more powerful stories of the second play. I was thirteen years old when I was in that play.

RG: Did your dad get in the play because of you?

NH: In fourth grade, I saw a Kentucky Educational Television special on the first *Higher Ground*, and one of my classmates was in it, so I told my dad, "If they ever do another one of these, we need to do it. And sure enough, a couple years passed and there was a casting call, and I dragged him down to the college with me. My little brother joined for the third one, and then me and my dad did the fourth one.

AR: The third play, *Talking Dirt* (2011), focused on gossip and strip mining. It was the first performance that I was involved with. The play focused on a character whose grandfather passed away early on in the play. He was left with the decision of whether to move away from the mountains to have better opportunities for himself or whether to stay and be with his family and the people he cared about. He also had to decide whether he wanted to sell the land to the people that were trying to strip mine it, and the land obviously was important to him because it belonged to his papaw. Another theme was gossip. *Talking Dirt* was not only about land—the physical dirt—but it was about people having an opinion on everything and not being afraid to voice that opinion. It was also about people talking about things they think they know but they may not. This was our *Gone with the Wind*. It was longer than any other play and had the largest cast—around eighty or so.

RG: *Talking Dirt* was the first of our plays that dealt with what it was like to be young in the mountains in this time. We continued that theme with *Fog Lights* in 2013—our fourth play. What do you remember about *Fog Lights*?

AR: *Fog Lights* was a very special play to me. It opened up the discussion of the region's unclear future, and allowed us to add stories of times where people have had clouded judgement and times where people have been in situations where they have not exactly known the answer right off, often times when their head has not exactly been clear. That was a really special show for me because we got into the idea of not thinking straight. So that play was special.

RG: So why was *Fog Lights* special?

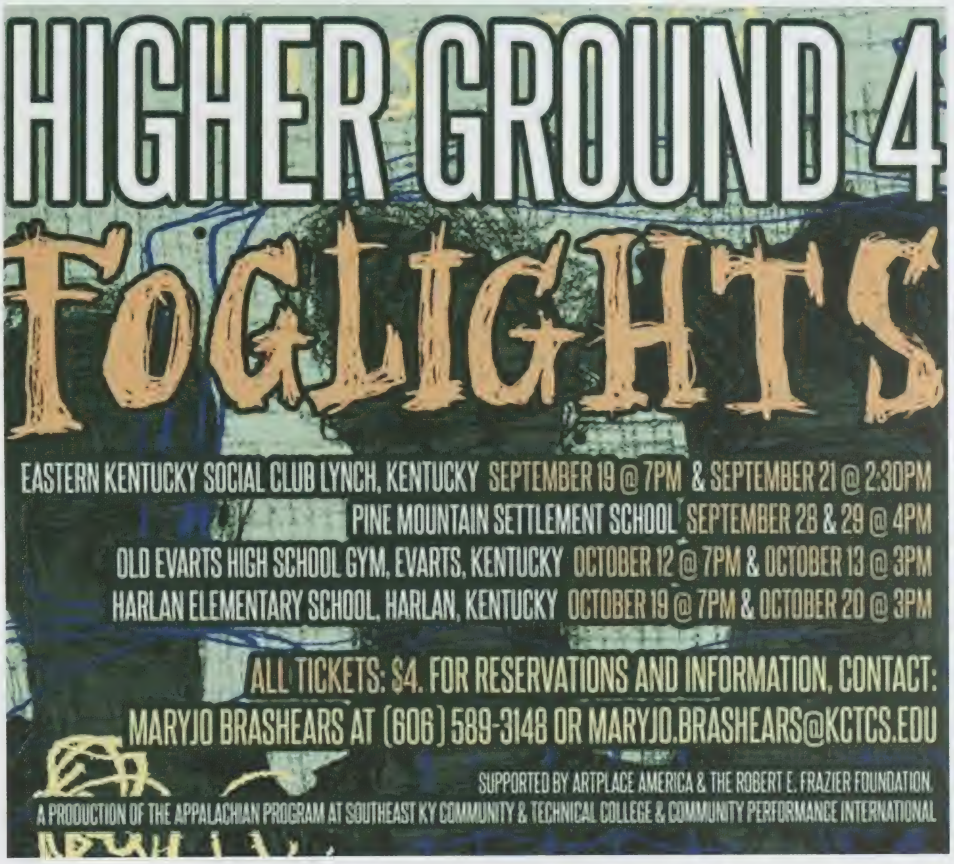
AR: It was because we got into stories about loss. People in our cast and in our community have lost people that are close to them, and it's just turned their world upside down. Theater can be very therapeutic in that it allows you to distance yourself from situations in real life because you can step out for a little while and realize that someone else is dealing with a different thing.

RG: Another thing is that for *Fog Lights* we had a grant from Art Place (now Art Place America) to start thinking about how to combine the *Higher Ground* play with community development—to change the way people thought about the community here in the coal fields as we make the economic transition away from coal. So for that play, as a demonstration and as a way to build capacity, we built a seven-stage set with 150 seating units—bleachers and chairs. It took six or seven twenty-six foot trucks to haul the set around to four different communities in Harlan County. That construction and all that moving gave a lot of our young people experience in managing a project. Austin worked as an assistant stage manager. Working with the high-school art department, we also made some big "junk" panels—plywood on frames,

with junk on them—which we spray painted. One of the storylines was a father who wanted his daughter to move back, but he was a big hoarder. The metaphor was that if the older generation wants the younger generation to thrive, they have to make room for them. These themes played into the fifth play, *Find a Way*, in 2015.

MR: Yes. The fifth play was about young people trying to find a way for themselves. It centered on a dad who had lost his job and was scared to tell his family, so he ran away from his problems. That's something I can relate to because my father was the exact same way. The dad tried to hide it; his son was in denial, and his high-school buddies bullied him about it. The son ended up dying when he went out on a dam. Everyone around him was thinking, *We have to find something new*. The dad also ended up losing his life, so this whole story line turns into a loss of life. The play also featured an interracial couple who were gay. One of the girls was on drugs, and her significant other had to deal with that. My character, Dot, is very special to me. She ended up taking a wrong job because she loved the mountains and wanted to stay here. She made her own business and people thought she was crazy. We also hit on education and the fact that maybe it's not all it should be around here. The song at the end was called "What's Next," and we were all wondering, *Where do we go from here? What happens?*

RG: Austin and Marissa are brother and sister, and Austin was also one of the co-directors of the fifth play. We had had professional directors for the first four plays, and we just kind of threw Austin in there for *Find a Way* and said, "Run this thing." Austin, what do you remember? Are there scars that haven't healed yet?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FOGLIGHTS
EASTERN KENTUCKY SOCIAL CLUB LYNCH, KENTUCKY SEPTEMBER 19 @ 7PM & SEPTEMBER 21 @ 2:30PM
PINE MOUNTAIN SETTLEMENT SCHOOL SEPTEMBER 28 & 29 @ 4PM
OLD EVARTS HIGH SCHOOL GYM, EVARTS, KENTUCKY OCTOBER 12 @ 7PM & OCTOBER 13 @ 3PM
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Poster advertising *Higher Ground 4: Fog Lights*.

AR: I don't think I have any scars. I enjoyed co-directing. I said to Robert, "Hey, I'm the young person here and I have the same interests that these professionals do. I want to do the same thing and get more involved in the production. I want to do this kind of work."

I had shadowed Bobby Martin on the third play, and then I was an assistant stage manager to director Richard Geer on the fourth play. That was my first exposure to directing or any kind of theater. All through high school I was never involved in theater, but you know, I really gathered an interest in it. I not only wanted to be involved but to learn the production side of things. I talked with Robert to get a mentoring system going. So Robert confided in us that he thought we were ready to take on bigger responsibilities and help direct it.

We actually met with Bobby for a week in Berea to plan and prepare. During production he mentored us, visiting at the start and during the middle of the production. Robert also played a role; he set us up to do things right.

RG: So, talk little bit about all the performances that have taken place outside of Harlan County?

MR: The plays have traveled to Berea, Kentucky, and to North Carolina for ROOTS week. We went to Louisville in Kentucky and to Emory and Henry in Virginia.

RG: Austin, where else have you performed?

AR: We've been to Washington, D.C., to perform for the Appalachian Teaching Project, a conference held by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

NH: We also did a "mashup" of the first two plays at the Appalachian Studies Conference in Dahlonega, Georgia, and performed at the network of ensemble theatre at Microfest, which came to Knoxville as part of an Appalachian conference. We also performed in Harlan in August 2015 at the conference for next generation leadership called "It's Good to Be Young in the Mountains."

RG (to AR and MR): Austin and Marissa, I've been involved with this from the beginning. Do you have any questions for me about the past? Anything you've ever wondered?

AR: What made you want to take something like this on?

RG: I didn't know it was going to be like this. I thought we would do one play and that would be that. I wasn't even very excited about doing a play. I don't really like plays, but the power of the plays and how everybody worked together to create and stage them is a powerful community organizing tool. You think of the organizations in the community like ours: There are church teams, sports, and schools, but there is hardly any community that has something like Higher Ground. I don't think our group necessarily likes theater, and they wouldn't do just any play. It's because it's for the community and about the community. The group becomes a community. One of our group members is doing a Higher Ground cookbook based on recipes that are in the plays, and also from potlucks that are brought to dinners. We eat together a lot as a cast.

So, by way of a summary, I'll ask you two questions: What differences does Higher Ground make? Why do you guys do it?

AR: I just do it partly because I like theater and because I like to act and direct. But mostly I do it because of the way it affects people. I got picked on a lot as a kid. I let other people's opinions make me think less of myself. When I got involved in the play I saw people who cared about life and about each other. It really changed me because I had been very backward and secluded, and when I got involved, it really turned my life around. It helped me get closure. It also gave me a unit, a support group. Marissa and I both have had a lot of things come our way since we got involved. Had we not had the play to keep us occupied and keep us invested and keep us looking forward to something, we may not have come out as good as we did. I'm just thankful for it.

RG: Marissa, can you try to speak for the whole community and for yourself, too? What difference do you think the Higher Ground program makes to everybody?

MR: To touch on what Austin said and go even further, the plays hit on so many issues and affect so many people. You can look out to the audience and see people crying—or laughing—and you feel that what you are doing is making a difference. These shows have traveled throughout the community. They put issues out there that people wouldn't have voiced by themselves, and the sense of family in Higher Ground is overwhelming. When you work with people every day, you're going to be close, but even during an offseason, you still know you could call anybody up if you needed them, and they'd be there.

MR (to RG): What are your hopes for Higher Ground? Where's it going to go?

AR (to RG): Whenever you decide to stop being involved, what do you hope you will have accomplished?

RG: What I love about Higher Ground is that it keeps being new. When it first started, there were people who said we should just do the first play over and over—it would never get any better—and there are people who think the first play was the best one. But I don't care. What I think is important is that a community keeps creating itself and talking to itself. It's like life. It's like having babies. We don't know if we need them, but we keep making them and we do need them. You must have somebody to carry on. To that end, the most important thing is that our college gave me a job. And because I had a job, I was able to make part-time work for lots of people and full-time work for a few people. I think it is super important that an institution like Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College stays invested in this kind of work and recognize how it has helped our students and our community. My one wish is that when I stop doing this, the commitment to making a job for somebody to do this kind of work will go on. I'd like to think a guy like Noah, who has been involved with this since he was thirteen, can grow up thinking, *Hey. Someday it will be my turn to do it*. It is important that everybody gets a chance to engage with the community and see what is going on and then give it back to them in this artistic form.❖

Robert Gipe is the Appalachian Program Director at Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College. He is the author of the novel *Trampoline* which won the Weatherford Award for fiction in 2016.

The Winding Stream

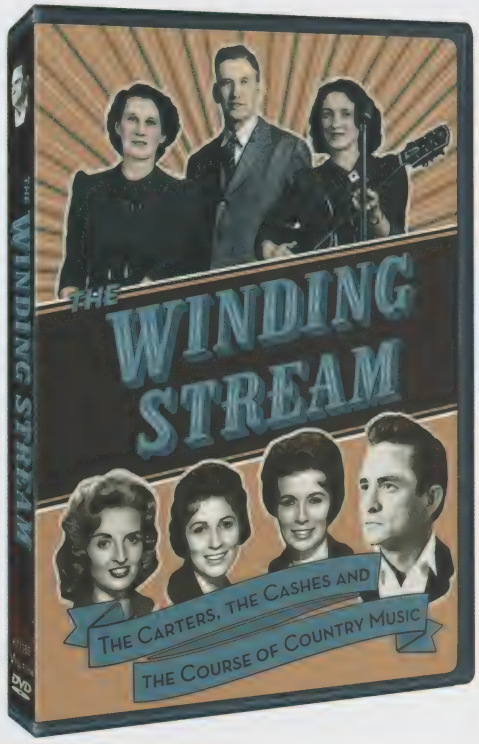
Laureatte Loy

By all historical accounts, Alvin Pleasant Carter was somewhat less than an attentive and enthusiastic farmer. While he coaxed enough plant life from the earth to sustain his family, farming was not an apparent calling. But A.P. would come to cultivate the music of hardscrabble Appalachia and through their pivotal role in the 1927 Bristol Sessions and later on through Border Radio, the Carter Family would broadcast the seeds of country music across the nation and into generations to come.

As a kid growing up in 1960s suburban Boston, Beth Harrington was oblivious to the story of the Carter Family and its influence. She was drawn to the music of her own generation. By her late teen years Harrington was doing much more—she was reading album jackets and liner notes—devouring music history one recording at a time. Harrington loved the Beatles, but who was this Chuck Berry with a name in tiny print on the album? Who was Howlin' Wolf and what was his name doing on a Rolling Stones LP? In the meantime *The Johnny Cash Show* debuted in 1969, and a teenaged Harrington was exposed to Neil Young, Bob Dylan, and Mother Maybelle Carter. As she began to make more connections, Harrington was developing a lifelong passion for cultivating and preserving the rich history of the music we hear today. She would eventually become an award-winning documentary filmmaker, but first, Beth Harington had a few years to expend her youthful energy as a rock-and-roll singer with Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers.

In her later adult years, Harrington's musical taste turned toward folk and what has been more recently coined "roots" music. Harrington read through even more album covers and liner notes. There, with increasing frequency, she saw the names of the original Carter Family. She recalls, "Much of what I grew to love came from the South—a world I didn't live in—Dylan, Baez, and others, all playing Carter Family Music."

By the time Harrington began to work on *The Women of Rockabilly: Welcome to the Club*, she'd already made a name for herself in the documentary film business, and in a serendipitous twist of fate, Rosanne Cash accepted the invitation to narrate *Rockabilly*. The film would later be nominated for a 2003 Grammy. Harrington had been percolating the notion for a Carter Family documentary even as she was bringing *Rockabilly* to fruition. In 2001, while Rosanne Cash was in Oregon, close to where Harrington was living, the first interview for *The Winding Stream: The Carters, the Cashes and the Course of Country Music* was recorded.



The Winding Stream DVD. Image courtesy the author.

Throughout the making of *The Winding Stream,* Harrington plowed through extensive written material related to the Carters, much of it with the guidance of Dr. Charles Wolfe, an English professor at Middle Tennessee State University, and Dr. Ted Olson, a professor in the Department of Appalachian Studies at East Tennessee State University. Both scholars possessed extensive knowledge of and had written extensively about Appalachia and its musical roots. Early on Harrington began to consider the archival fate of her own collected material from *The Winding Stream.* Her connection to Dr. Olson led to her decision to donate all of her material to the Archives of Appalachia at ETSU. There it will receive proper care and be accessible to scholars, students, and other interested parties.

One of the critical "independent" pieces of the independent filmmaking puzzle is financing. The film progressed incrementally, mirroring its funding. Harrington, often alone or with only her "production assistant," a.k.a.

"husband," would travel as financial resources allowed. It took almost thirteen years to complete the ninety-minute documentary film.

Harrington first visited southwest Virginia's Poor Valley in May of 2003 to meet Janette Carter, A.P. and Sara's daughter, and Rita Forrester, Janette's daughter and granddaughter of Sara and A.P. Harrington arrived to meet them at the Carter Family Fold, the family's music venue. Shortly after arriving she received a call from Rita with the devastating news that June Carter Cash had been hospitalized, in critical condition, at a Nashville hospital. The meeting was canceled. June Carter Cash passed away later that night. It would take two more trips to Poor Valley to get the interviews that Harrington sought.

As Harrington relates, "Janette really held the history and legacy of the original Carter Family. She was an impressive woman and I believe she had an iron hand."

Janette had made a powerful promise to her daddy—to keep his music alive for generations to come. Harrington calls it an "open mandate." All Janette had to do was build a music venue and hold live old time and bluegrass shows . . . for the rest of her life.

Knowing that Rosanne Cash's famous father, Johnny Cash, was precariously ill and still acutely grieving June's death, Harrington had no intention of approaching the family to request an interview with him. She didn't have to. Rosanne suggested it and urged her to do it very soon. Time was currently a precious commodity for Johnny Cash. "He wants to talk about this," Rosanne told Harrington. Harrington and her crew flew to Nashville in August of 2003, only to get a call from the Cash family saying that Johnny had just been hospitalized. The caller added, "If you can stay and wait a couple of days he might be out." They stayed. They waited. A call came from John Carter Cash, Johnny and June's son, saying that his father was home and ready to see them that day. Although physically exhausted from his hospital stay, Cash did indeed want to talk about June and about the Carter family he'd come to love and revere. Harrington was prepared to approach the interview carefully and respectfully, beginning with the original Carter Family, but Cash went straight to his love story with June. He said, "You want to hear the real story? Alright. . . ."

Harrington says that it wasn't long before she and her crew and Cash were all in tears. Johnny Cash died less than a month after the interview.

As part of the usual business of filmmaking, Harrington was obligated to pay publishing and recording fees to use various material throughout the film. Additional anticipated fees would be compensation for the performing musicians. Among the who's who, beyond the Carters and Cashes, are featured musicians John Prine, Sheryl Crow, Kris Kristofferson, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Norman and Nancy Blake, and the Carolina Chocolate Drops. According to Harrington, without exception, not one musician accepted compensation for his or her contribution to *The Winding Stream*: "No, I'm happy to do it." "Don't worry about it, I'm good." "It was my pleasure."

Regardless of the particular words, their responses were a clear indication of the measure of respect, affection, and reverence held for these groundbreaking pioneers of country music. *The Winding Stream* premiered at the SXSW Film Festival in March of 2014 and continued to run the festival gauntlet, receiving several awards. The film has recently wrapped up several months of screenings at art house theaters around the country. Fittingly, *The Winding Stream* was also screened at the Carter Family Fold, just a few dozen feet from the cabin where A. P. Carter was born. Yes, the circle remains unbroken and the harvest from Poor Valley is, in fact, quite rich. ❖

Transplanted to Appalachia from her native Michigan, Laureatte Loy is a psychiatric nurse who recently began working in public radio at WETS-FM.

Cultivating Appalachian Music

Wayne Winkler

Dan Boner and Ted Olson. Photo by O.J. Early.

Cultivation of Appalachian music is one way to describe the work of two members of the Department of Appalachian Studies at East Tennessee State University. Ted Olson teaches courses in Appalachian culture. He is also a record producer, nominated for four Grammy awards for his work on collections of Appalachian music. Dan Boner is the director of ETSU's Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies program—the first such program ever offered at a four-year university.

Born in western Massachusetts, Olson grew up in Washington, D.C. As a teenager, he worked at a camp in West Virginia, where he met Jack Schaffenaker, a respected traditional musician who became something of a mentor. Olson soon became aware of Appalachia and the stereotypes associated with the region and its culture. "It was also a time when D.C. was often called the Bluegrass Capitol of the world," Olson recalls. "The National Folk Festival and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival were happening within the city, so folk music and folk culture were everywhere, although they were heavily curated by the Federal government and by culture leaders and brokers like Mike Seeger and other folks." He supplemented what he learned from these sources with his own trips into the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and West Virginia.

Olson attended college in Minneapolis, "a city haunted by the ghost of Bob Dylan, who was a dropout of the University of Minnesota." After receiving a degree in English (with a history minor), Olson worked for the National Park Service as a ranger on the Blue Ridge Parkway and also at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, giving programs and lectures. Though he loved working for the Park Service, he eventually realized he wanted to delve deeper into topics than his job allowed him to do.

Olson received a master's degree in English at the University of Kentucky. Realizing he wanted to take an interdisciplinary approach to cultural studies in his doctoral work, he went to the University of Mississippi. At Ole Miss, Olson began a magazine called *CrossRoads: A Journal of Southern Culture* (later named *CrossRoads: A Southern Cultural Annual* and published by Mercer University Press) and wrote for magazines such as *Living Blues* and *Old Time Country*. His dissertation became a book, *Blue Ridge Folklife*, a volume in the Folklife of the South series, published in 1998.

After coming to East Tennessee State University in 1999 to teach Appalachian Studies, Olson met Charles Wolfe, a writer and professor at Middle Tennessee State. They collaborated on a book: *The Bristol Sessions: Writings on the Big Bang of Country Music*, about Ralph Peer's historic recording sessions of 1927 and 1928, which resulted in the first records by the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers. Published in 2005, the book won the award for Appalachian Book of the Year for Nonfiction from the Appalachian Writers Association.

Wolfe died just after the book was published, but he and Olson had agreed that more work needed to be done to tell the full story of the Bristol Sessions. "It was kind of like we had liner notes without the recordings," says Olson.

Ted Olson performing. Photo courtesy Ted Olson.

"Charles Wolfe had actually released a two-album set of 'cherry picked' recordings from the Bristol Sessions in the mid-1980s, but a lot of the greatest recordings from the Bristol Sessions weren't on there."

Olson considered several American record companies that did reissues, but in the end was drawn to an international company: Bear Family Records of Germany, founded in 1975 by collector Richard Weize. Olson sent an e-mail to Weize, who responded almost immediately: "Let's do it."

Olson teamed up with English scholar Tony Russell, like Wolfe a pioneer in the study of American roots music. *The Bristol Sessions* received two Grammy nominations, for Best Historical Album and Best Album Notes. That project led to *The Johnson City Sessions*, chronicling recordings made by Columbia Records producer Frank Walker in 1928 and 1929. This release received the Jack Spadaro Documentary Award for Best Documentary on Appalachia. An east Tennessee trilogy was completed in April of this year with the release of *The Knoxville Sessions*, covering the 1929-1930 sessions produced by Brunswick Records subsidiary Vocalion, which, unlike the first two sets, featured a significant input from African-American performers.

Olson returned to his park ranger roots when he did the liner notes for *Old Time Smoky Mountain Music*, a 2012 collection of songs, ballads, and instrumentals recorded in 1939 in the area being incorporated into Great Smoky Mountains National Park by "song catcher" Joseph S. Hall. That CD was also nominated for a Best Historical Album Grammy. Another set of recordings made by Joseph Hall, *Carroll Best and the White Oak String Band*, earned Olson a nomination for Best Liner Notes from the International Bluegrass Music Association. Another Grammy nomination for Olson in the Best Album Notes category came in 2016 for the Bear Family collection *Tennessee Ernie Ford: Portrait of an American Singer*.

Earlier this year, the Dust to Digital label released another Olson production, *Blind Alfred Reed: Appalachian Visionary* (reviewed in this issue). Another project released this spring is the first of two new releases from the Great Smoky Mountains Association featuring modern interpretations of the Joseph Hall recordings by a range of leading roots music artists including Dolly Parton.

University professors are expected to do research and publish their findings. Like most professors, Olson publishes books—but his books have CDs with them. "Nobody told me to do it that way," he says. "This is the way I chose to carry forward my research agenda. I wanted to do something that required a different kind of networking and a different kind of interpretation, and that was curated collections of recordings for the general public."

While Ted Olson is documenting the Appalachian music of the past, his colleague in ETSU's Department of Appalachian Studies is helping to create the Appalachian music of the future. Dan Boner is director of the university's Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies program.

Dan learned bluegrass growing up in southern New Jersey. "It's the first music I remember hearing," he recalls. "There was a huge community of southern people who had moved to the farmlands of South Jersey, people who relocated from places like Newport, Tennessee. My dad's family was from the coalfields of West Virginia, and they moved to New Jersey to work at Owens-Illinois and Wheaton glass factories. My dad didn't want to be a coal miner or a logger, which were the two jobs available in West Virginia. His brother was killed logging, and our cousin was killed in the mines. My West Virginia roots have always connected me to this music."

Boner's father is a machinist, mechanic, and welder. He also pastors (without requesting compensation) a Baptist church near Bridgeton, New Jersey. His relatives played bluegrass and traditional country music, and as a young child Dan sat on the front pew of the church holding a guitar. "I didn't know what the chords were but I thumped and banged along until I was about six or seven years

Dan Boner looks on as Rhonda Vincent speaks to students. Photo by Jim Sledge.

old. Then I got a better guitar and took some lessons from my great-uncle Larry, who was pastoring the church in those early years before my dad took over. I went to church every Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night, and trained my ear listening to the small congregation singing. When I was eleven years old I joined The Strings of Gospel with David Reed [son of Ola Belle Reed] and toured regionally with them for about six years. These experiences helped me to understand, at a young age, the power of music and how it can really help people in huge ways. I didn't learn to read music; I didn't want any part of that until much later, when I went to high school and then college."

Boner learned of ETSU's Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies program from a high-school English teacher. "He said, 'Yeah, Tim Stafford and Barry Bales [alumni of the program], they're working for Alison Krauss. [Stafford later founded Blue Highway.]. You ought to check that out.' So I looked it up on the old website Jack Tottle put together. It was the only school I applied for."

After graduating with a degree in music education, Boner began teaching as an adjunct faculty member in the bluegrass program, teaching music theory, band classes, instrumental instruction, and voice—the first voice teacher in the program. By this time, students could minor in Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music, but there was still not a degree available. When the position of assistant director of the program came open, Boner applied for it. "Sometimes I pinch myself and wonder why they hired me to be assistant director. I was young, and there must have been applicants with better academic credentials than I; there were probably others with greater professional experience. Maybe it was because I was willing to work a little harder than others; I would stay late, work countless weekends, and try always to do my best. I was pretty determined."

In January 2010, the program —by now part of ETSU's Department of Appalachian Studies—began offering a bachelor's degree; now students could major in Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies—another first for the program. That same month, Dan Boner became director of the program. By then, he had a lot of experience under his belt —as a teacher and administrator, but also as a professional musician. He had made national and international concert tours of Italy, Japan, Germany, Belgium, Canada, England, and Scotland; performing at venues that include St. Peter's Basilica, NATO Headquarters, the Smithsonian National Folklife Festival, the Grand Ole Opry, and The White House. His music can be heard on more than fifty recordings, including his 2007 solo album, *The Gospel Way*. He has helped make bluegrass an international music style, working for six years with Japanese bluegrass shamisen virtuoso Takeharu Kunimoto. Since last year, he has been on the festival circuit as a full-time member of the Becky Buller Band. He was nominated by the International Bluegrass Music Association for the 2015 Mentor of the Year Award.

But his primary job is teaching students how to play the music he loves. Most of the people who have played this music have learned it the way Boner originally learned it—informally,

learning from relatives and friends, without knowing how to read music, relying on his ear, and developing his abilities through on-stage experience. Some of the students learned that way as well. But others may have taken music lessons, learned to read music, and have to learn the art of improvisation. Sometimes what Boner and the other instructors have to do is help students unlearn some of the formal approach they might have learned years before.

"Young children observe and hear people using language long before they themselves are capable of speaking," says Boner. "As their physical vocal mechanism begins to develop, they're able to start forming small words by imitating what they hear. And then their vocabulary grows. Then you teach a child how to write, to use written language—small words at first. And it's not until years later that kids are taught the theory of writing; they learn grammar and sentence structure.

"Somehow in music we got it backwards. We start with the written notation first. 'This symbol equals this finger on this string at this pitch. We play that; now here's the next note, and it goes here.' So students are visualizing a note on a page and associating it with a finger position. Aural recognition occurs following the visual and kinesthetic associations.

"Why do we not do it the other way? Why don't we start with the imitation and making of music prior to introducing written sheet music? I think Suzuki was keen to that, and it's the way traditional music around the world has always been passed down. It wasn't until much later that people decided, 'Let's go backwards; let's publish books about it, this method and that method.' Musicians are first learning the written notation, then the theory, and after years of this we wonder why 'trained' musicians become paralyzed when asked to improvise their own musical ideas on the spot.

"Some students in the program have no formal music education but are used to playing the music intuitively; others learned formally and know the written notes and music theory but can't just sit down and play without written music. And still other students fall somewhere between those two poles.

"It takes a different approach with each student," says Boner. "The insecurity that one group of students has is totally different from what the other group has, so we try to bridge those gaps. And that's why it's important to have a faculty of diverse teachers who can relate to all the diverse students in our program."

More and more, the program is attracting students who already have a great deal of experience in playing the music. But the program still serves a larger community of people who don't intend to become professional musicians, but want to take lessons and learn to play better for their own enjoyment. And others simply want to learn about the cultural aspects of the music. ETSU's Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies allows students to get what they want from it.

The program's reputation grows with each crop of graduates. Recent grads like Noah Wall and Amythyst Kiah Phillips have embarked on promising careers. Gary Hultman, who hasn't yet graduated, has played with Adam Steffey's Grammy-nominated group The Boxcars since 2014. Some current students are spending their summers on the festival circuit, playing alongside their heroes. Some graduates have found different career paths through the program. Kris Truelson, an accomplished bluegrass and old-time musician, received a bachelor's degree in bluegrass and a master's degree in Appalachian studies; he now works for the Birthplace of Country Music Museum in Bristol, applying what he learned about the culture and history of the music.

As Plato said, "You cannot have an abundant crop without cultivation." Dan Boner and Ted Olson, along with the other faculty and staff in the Appalachian Studies program, are cultivating musicians who have more than an intuitive knowledge of the music; they know theory, the characteristics of various styles, and a history of the music and its place in Appalachian culture. But they are also cultivating an appreciation for the rich heritage and culture of Appalachia, creating a harvest that has spread worldwide.❖

Wayne Winkler is the Director of WETS-FM, East Tennessee State University's public radio station. He is a past-president of the Melungeon Heritage Association and the author of *Walking Toward the Sunset: The Melungeons of Appalachia*.

Blind Alfred Reed
Appalachian Visionary
Dust to Digital

Ralph Peer of Victor Records recorded nineteen acts during the historic Bristol Sessions in July and August of 1927. While the performances are now widely known as "The Big Bang of Country Music," only three of those acts were offered contracts to make more recordings: The Carter Family, Jimmie Rodgers, and Blind Alfred Reed. The Carters and Rodgers subsequently became the first superstars of country music. Reed, on the other hand, made only a few more records, went home to West Virginia, and died in obscurity. Ted Olson, who produced this retrospective of Blind Alfred Reed, believes it is time for Reed to get the recognition he deserves.

Appalachian Visionary was designed to be a book with a CD. The packaging resembles a hymnal, and the booklet contains an extensive biography of Reed, notes on each song, and lots of photographs. Most importantly, it illustrates the important legacy of Blind Alfred Reed whose songs have been reinterpreted by artists ranging from The New Lost City Ramblers and Old Crow Medicine Show to UB40 and The Del-Lords to Ry Cooder and Bruce Springsteen.

Reed was, in Olson's words, "a lay Methodist minister with a fundamentalist yet idiosyncratic moral compass." He wrote and recorded several religious songs—three of his four recordings at the Bristol Sessions were religious in nature—and even his secular songs conveyed his sense of morality. One of his better-known songs, "Why Do You Bob Your Hair, Girls?" was critical of the popular "flapper" hairstyle of the 1920s; he must have felt strongly about that, because he recorded a second part two years later. "You Must Unload," recorded at the Bristol Sessions, was critical of the "fashion-loving Christian," the "money-loving Christian," and the "Christians with your card games," assuring them there is Euchre playing in heaven.

But the majority of Reed's recorded output dealt with the relationships between men and women, and many demonstrate a wry sense of humor. "We've Got to Have 'Em, That's All" acknowledges that women can be vexing, but "we can't get along without 'em" because they "mop and scrub and do the cooking, Make the beds and milk and gather in the eggs." In "Woman's Been after Man Ever Since," Reed decries women who "try to be so much like men / They'll run for office if they get a chance," but reminds them that, according to the Bible, man was made first: "Woman was made after man, and she's been after man ever since."

Reed's final recordings were made at the RCA studio in Camden, New Jersey, in December of 1929, less than two months after the stock market crash that marked the beginning of the Great Depression. But, as Reed knew well, many Americans were experiencing hard times long before the Crash. "Money Cravin' Folks" took aim at all those who exploited the working man: the landlord, the merchant, the lawyer, the doctor, even those preachers who "don't plumb the line." And "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" is as true today as it was in 1929: "When we pay our grocery bill / we just feel like making our will / Officers kill without cause / then complain about funny laws / the doctor gives a humbug pill / a dose of dope and a great big bill."

One of the songs recorded at his final session was "You'll Miss Me." Unfortunately, Blind Alfred Reed wasn't missed; his records didn't sell well and his contract was not renewed. He went back to West Virginia, continued to play music at social gatherings and on the streets, worked his farm, and died in 1956 without notice from anyone but his family and neighbors. But his songs have lived on, and *Appalachian Visionary* gives Blind Alfred Reed the respect he deserves. ❖

Loretta Lynn
Full Circle
Legacy

Full Circle is Loretta Lynn's first album since the 2004 *Van Lear Rose*, produced by former White Stripes frontman Jack White. With its garage band aesthetic,

Van Lear Rose was simultaneously fresh and traditional. It could have opened a new phase of Lynn's career, as Rick Rubin's production did for Johnny Cash. Instead, Loretta Lynn seemed to go into retirement. But she was still recording. Now, a dozen years after her last album, Lynn has released an album that doesn't explore new directions, but celebrates the strengths that made her a star decades ago. Produced by Johnny and June's son John Carter Cash and Lynn's daughter Patsy Lynn Russell, the album benefits from their clean, spare approach, which showcases Lynn's versatility as a vocalist. *Full Circle* is made up of songs recorded over the last eight years at Cash Cabin Studio.

The opening track is the first song Lynn ever wrote after becoming a professional singer, "Whispering Sea," which was the B-side of her first single. *Full Circle* finds Lynn exploring her musical past, with "Black Jack David" and "I Never Will Marry," songs she sang in her Kentucky childhood; "Secret Love," another of her early compositions; and a remake of one of her best-known songs, "Fist City." A recent composition, "Everything it Takes" ("She's got everything it takes to take everything you've got."), is classic Loretta Lynn, sung here in a duet with Elvis Costello. Given the title of the album, and the inclusion of songs like "Who's Gonna Miss Me?" and "Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven," some have thought this was a last look back for the 83-year-old country legend. But Loretta Lynn is looking ahead, not back; she continues to tour and has expressed plans to write more songs and record again with Jack White. This Coal Miner's Daughter isn't through just yet. ❖

Reagan Boggs
Empty Glasses
Reckless Bess Records

The fourth album from Reagan Boggs finds her maturing as both a singer and a songwriter. Her previous release, *Quicksand*, went to number thirty-five on the Americana Music Chart. Comparing Boggs to legendary singers like Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, and Emmylou Harris, Lee Zimmerman in *No Depression* describes her voice as "filtered through a mix of hard-wrought emotion and soothing sensitivity, the kind that breeds great balladry and stirs the senses simultaneously." Heritage is essential to this southwest Virginia native. The opening cut, "The Graves," cries out against the destruction of her native mountains and the uprooting of tradition—a tradition reinforced by her cover of the Carter Family's "The Storms Are on the Ocean." Driving down the "Hillbilly Highway," Boggs sees the closed coal mines and shattered dreams of her home region, and the haunting "Ready to Run" takes us into the horrors of a family suffering extreme abuse. The characters in these songs live lives of not-always-quiet desperation, but Boggs' sensitivity and genuine sympathy lift them above stereotypes.

All but two songs were produced by guitarist Dave Coleman of the Coal Men, the trio that works with Boggs regularly. Eric Fritsch produced "Ready to Run" and "West End," and the entire project was crowdfunded through Kickstart. Fortunately a lot of us know and believe in Reagan Boggs, and our support has been rewarded with another fine collection of deeply felt and expertly-performed songs. ❖

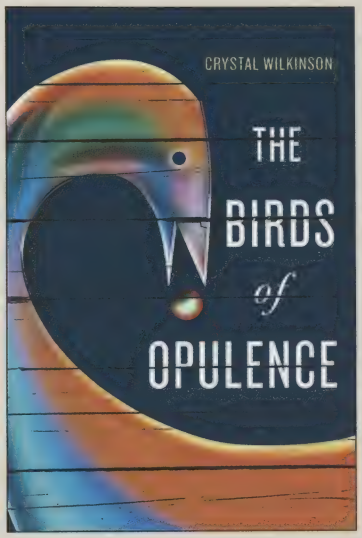
Various Artists
I Saw the Light *(Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*
Legacy

The Hank Williams biopic *I Saw the Light* has been almost universally panned by critics. Catherine Shoard of *The Guardian* says, "it takes a rare kind of talent to make a movie about him such a dirge." Sarah Kurchac of *Consequence of Sound* calls it "truly perplexing … not even close to being a good film." Other critics call the movie "shockingly bad," "unconvincing," "a dull, unfocused slog," "a sickly sentimental biopic." Most of those same critics praise British actor Tom Hiddleston (best known for portraying Loki in the Marvel Comic series of films) both for his acting and his singing. The

soundtrack, produced by Rodney Crowell, G. Marq Roswell, Carter Little, and Ray Kennedy, seems more respectful of Hank's musical legacy than the film itself. Hiddleston and the Saddle String Boys (including Crowell, Stuart Duncan, Richard Bennett, and Mickey Raphael) perform six of the thirteen songs on the soundtrack CD, and faithfully capture the sound and feel of Williams classics like "Hey Good Lookin'," "Move it on Over," "Jambalaya," and others. The remainder of the songs are original versions of songs that shared the hit parade with Williams during his lifetime, including "Anytime" from Eddy Arnold, the Delmore Brothers' "Field Hand Man," and "That's What's Knockin' Me Out" from Jimmy Liggins, along with the original 1925 recording of "Lovesick Blues" by Emmett Miller. Most of the film's critics cited as a fault the film's focusing more on Hank Williams' demons than on his music. These faithful reproductions of classic Williams songs suggest that more music might have improved the film considerably. But Williams' original recordings are readily available, and these remakes add nothing to our appreciation of Williams' tortured genius. ❖

End of Music Reviews

Birds of Opulence
Crystal Wilkinson
Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2016
216 pages



The opening of Crystal Wilkinson's *Birds of Opulence* issues an irresistible invitation for readers to enter the lives of the Goode-Brown family: "Imagine a tree, a bird in the tree, the hills, the creek, a possum, the dog chasing the possum. Imagine yourself a woman who gathers stories in her apron." Thus readers first hear the voice of Yolanda Brown, who magically bears witness to events on the day she is born. Her baby spirit "stretched itself out and flew around the sky a time or two before settling back inside" her mother. This lush, lyrical prose is unsurprising from Wilkinson, a critically acclaimed poet and award-winning author of *Blackberries, Blackberries* and *Water Street*.

Opulence is the name of the southern black township inhabited by the Goode-Brown family. The community's name is ironic. If there is wealth to be found in Opulence, it lies in the love that binds the generations together and binds the people to their land. It lies in a granny's voice that is "biscuit-warm" when soothing a grandchild's worries. The birds in the title refer to four generations of women whose stories float through the novel's pages like feathers drifting through air: stories of Mama Minnie, Tookie, Lucy, and Yolanda. The matriarch, Mama Minnie, can read signs, such as the appearance of a bird portending birth or death. Next is her daughter Tookie, who would prefer her second grandchild be another boy because a boy "gives you less to worry about." She is reflecting on her own life, remembering how Minnie beat her when she became pregnant at thirteen with Lucy. And even though Lucy didn't become pregnant as an adolescent, she gives Tookie much to worry about when post-partum depression descends in a heavy fog after the birth of the second grandchild—Yolanda.

Mental illness haunts the Goode-Brown family and their neighbors, the Clarks. The younger generations dread the possibility of inheriting their mothers' affliction. When neighbor Francine's father leaves because he can't take her mother's crazy behavior, Francine watches her mother, not for understanding, but "to remember every sign of madness so she could avoid it in her own life." Beyond the dread of mental illness, the women of each generation experience the nearly universal and unnerving sensation of becoming their mothers. Lucy "looks down at her hands which she thinks look just

like her mother's. Lucy's fingers seem to be swimming away from her into Tookie's hands until she closes them into fists." Yolanda senses this too. When her childhood friend Mona asks if Yolanda's Grandmamma Tookie suffered at the end, Yolanda relates that she "was right peaceful." Mona realizes that they both sound old: "They sound like their mothers."

Joe Brown, Lucy's affable, hard-working husband, stands steady at the family's heart, in this "river of crazy women." Never having experienced a man like Joe herself, Tookie is hopeful for her daughter. But Joe's love is not enough to pull Lucy from the depression that overtakes her. Her adult life seems empty: "The cooking, cleaning part of her is all he recognizes now, all she recognizes of herself." The housekeeping role brings her no joy. Joe's reflections on their marriage are poignant because he has been such a loving husband: "if he'd tried hard enough he could have fixed it—like a puttering engine or a battery gone bad." He worries he "brought this on his family somehow."

Evocative details reveal an intimacy with country life ("a container for June bugs," "dinner rolls and the hens in the oven," "wild blackberries gleam fat and succulent on vines") and include traditions like Dinner on the Grounds. Women don colorful hats and their Sunday dresses and prepare their best dishes. Little girls glisten with pastel hair ribbons and patent leather shoes. Love and nostalgia pull city people home on such occasions, but Wilkinson is not content to leave readers with a sugar-coated version of the truth. The disdain that city and country folk have for each other's ways is artfully rendered. The hugs, the reminiscences, and the snide gossip ring true. Minnie's sons, who return for the fourth of July, reject the legacy of the homestead, suggesting it should be sold. The aging Minnie calls them "two full-grown damn fools" and realizes she has come to prefer "not the boys themselves, but the memories they trigger."

As the story shuttles back and forth in time and changes viewpoints, keeping the characters straight can prove challenging; and on occasion, verb tense shifts are jarring. Yet the sumptuous prose and keen insight into the complicated, shifting relationships of one generation to the next will surely bring Wilkinson further recognition for her talents. ❖

Donna Meredith is the author of four novels and one nonfiction book, as well as a frequent contributor to *Southern Literary Review*.

The Patron Saint of Ugly
Marie Manilla
New York: Mariner Books/
Houghton Mifflin 2014
334 pages

The Patron Saint of Ugly, Marie Manilla's second novel, is set in a dying fictional town called Sweetwater, in West Virginia. The protagonist is a young woman, Garnet Ferrari, who is being studied by the Vatican for possible sainthood due to her purported ability to heal those with afflictions that make them ugly to the rest of the world. Garnet is a member of an Italian American family whose members are just unique and noticeable enough to be my relatives or yours. Garnet's body is covered with port wine birthmarks that constitute a map of the world and her personal cross to bear. The novel juxtaposes Catholics and Protestants, immigrants and native born, rich and poor, young and old, beautiful and ugly, old and new religion, and West Virginia and the rest of the world. Manilla's manner of dealing with these juxtapositions is reminiscent of Flannery O'Connor at her best.

The novel is presented as a series of audio tape transcriptions Garnet is recording for the Vatican investigator sent to determine her legitimacy as a saint. They contain her autobiography and persistent denial of that sainthood as well as her deep-seated desire to know that her Italian Catholic father loves her. Manilla leads us along a wonderfully wrought path from Sicily to Sweetwater that makes us examine our own personal relationships, desires, ambitions, and flaws. Her rich sense of humor gives us a frequent chuckle and an occasional belly laugh. While hundreds of supplicants travel to Garnet's door on Dagowop Hill in search of healing, Saint Garnet hides in her inherited mansion and seeks her own redemption from the highly

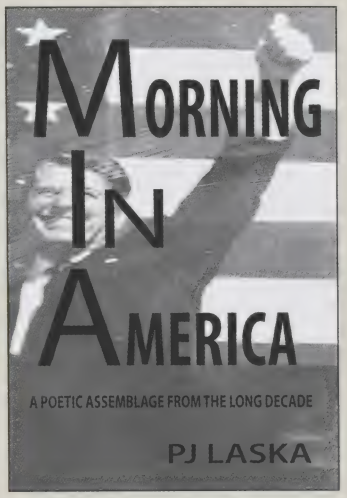
personal demons that, along with the port wine map of the world, complicate her life. Along the story's intricate path, Saint Garnet and the small circle of people who know, understand, and love her all suffer their own struggles.

The novel introduces numerous characters so many of us have known, or believe we knew: The loving and devoted grandmother, the struggling mother who deserves more, the despised and perverted cousin, the working-class father who seeks to give a wonderful wife all she deserves, and the brilliant but misunderstood sibling. Manilla blends all these characters and themes into a tightly woven story which assists readers in coming to self-knowledge and a fuller appreciation of their own flawed life and family. She also artfully kills off a few characters for the good of the story.

For more than a hundred years, Appalachia and West Virginia have benefitted from the lives, works, and descendants of Italian-American immigrants who came to perform the tasks which were too onerous or dangerous for those who persisted in the belief that they were too good, or smart, or rich, or valuable to perform those tasks. *The Patron Saint of Ugly* has now joined the ever growing list of such achievements from which we have all benefitted. Manilla has created a masterful and memorable work that leaves readers hoping to hear more from these characters and their creator. A "must read" for the lover of Appalachia and Appalachian literature, the novel won the Weatherford Award for best Appalachian novel in 2015.❖

Roger D. Hicks is an Appalachian writer and blogger from West Liberty, Kentucky.

Morning in America, A Poetic Assemblage from the Lost Decade
P.J. Laska
Canyon Texas: Igneus Press, 2016
174 pages



Let me state my bias up front: P.J. Laska was my professor at Antioch College-Appalachia and a fellow member of the Soupbean Poets, became a mentor, and has been my friend for over forty years. That being said, Laska is a literary genius, historian, political prognosticator, and Appalachian rebel rolled into one. He is a true red, white, black, and blue American patriot writer, a cultural prophet without recognition in his own land and time. But in a moment in our history when two one-percenters are about to vie for the US presidency in a corporate-funded media circus (which, by the way, is just as interested in the size of Kim Kardashian's Christmas card line as in whether people have real jobs, healthcare, and educations), can this really come as a great surprise?

Whatever. Laska's politically imagistic poems distill it all to essence. Witness these two timely gems:

"Foraging at Starbucks"

Round the trash barrel
at day's end
pigeons, sparrows
and a bag lady contend.

"At the Narcissist Café"

Bold and unsharing,
the urban sparrow
under the table
covets the too big
crust of bread.

It don't get any clearer than that: Wall Street excess and Citizens United rendered in imagism that will not be erased.

Near the beginning of this eclectic book one of Laska's many characters, who may emerge from ancient history or the shuffling halls of our currently and chronically underfunded VA hospitals, states, "A poet's nothing apart from people, apart from place." The time in which this book is placed is the 1980s when Ronald Reagan's "axe of austerity began falling on America's middle class . . . and on the working, non-working and disabled poor." Fall it did, but few heard and fewer still recorded it. Laska did. And in what might be called "mourning in America," he connects us with its horrid thud and the damage done that has only accelerated in pace and depth in the ensuing decades. We see the exposed flesh, smell the blood, feel the hunger, shiver, lose heart. If FDR saved capitalism

from itself, who will do so now as the Koch brothers' think tanks and Super-Pacs rapidly undo the fraying social safety networks set in place almost a century ago, Laska asks, with frighteningly good cause.

Referring to the 2008 meltdown of "Banks Too Big to Fail," which precipitated a one trillion dollar bailout (paid for by us) that made the pre-cursing schemes of the 80s seem like the primitive pyramid schemes of three-year-olds playing with colored wood blocks, Laska writes:

"It was a time when churches began installing loudspeakers in place of bells that daily tolled the noon hour / It was a time of felony fraudulent schemes in banking and abstract bite marks made with the stroke of a pen / It was the time of the multi-billion dollar Federal Bailout of the bankrupt de-regulated Savings and Loan used by former hard money lenders as their own personal piggy banks / It was a time when a little critical common sense could have glimpsed the disasters that lay ahead."

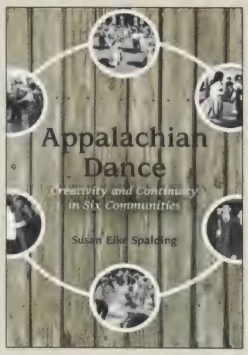
Laska's book is a tough read. It ain't for the faint-hearted, and it's intellectually challenging at times. I think I'm reasonably smart, but Laska stretches my mind until it hurts. Fortunately, he also gives intellectual exercise some much-needed comic relief and gallows humor. I laughed out loud three or four times while reading the book, a rarity for me. As another great Appalachian poet, Jim Webb, once wrote, "You can't make this stuff up!" Neither can Laska whose fascinating footnotes (almost forty pages of them) are just as interesting as the text and poems themselves—documentation with a punch. Prose poetry robbed from the headlines of the newspapers. Political forensic files.

I wish to end with this guardedly optimistic quote from Laska's preface: "Given the disasters of the Long Decade as it continues into the twenty-first century, the title *Morning in America* is bitterly ironic, but I do not foreclose on the possibility of a non-ironic meaning for it in the future." Hear, hear, Dr. Laska. Hear, hear. ❖

Bob Henry Baber is the author of *Pure Orange Sunshine* and co-editor, with George Ella Lyon and Gurney Norman, of *Old Wounds, New Words*.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

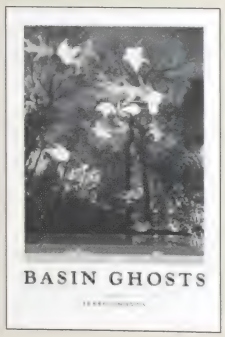
Appalachian Dance: Creativity and Continuity in Six Communities
Susan Eike Spalding
University of Illinois Press, 2014



Spalding's study of dance in Appalachia is a scholarly treatment of a subject that has not been investigated much. Focusing on the square dancing and "footwork" dancing (such as flatfooting, buck dancing, and clogging) historically associated with rural regions in this country, her research contributes new knowledge to the larger body of research on historical and contemporary influences on Appalachian communities. She describes square dance and footwork traditions in six different communities, looking at the history of their particular styles, venues, and meaning to participants.

Her consideration of dance traditions derives from her study of the central Appalachian dance groups at Beechwood, in Fall Branch, Tennessee; Martinsville, Virginia; Dante, Russell County, Virginia; Pine Mountain Settlement School in Bledsoe, Kentucky; Hoedown Island in Torrent, Kentucky; and Carcassonne, Kentucky. Rich in incident and idea, this winner of the 2015 Weatherford Award for nonfiction might tell some lay readers more than they want to know about dance in Appalachia, but the book has so much local history and human interest that it is likely to appeal to casual readers interested in the communities as well as to scholars. ❖

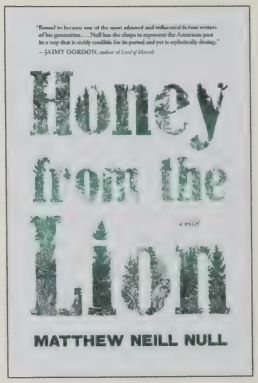
Basin Ghosts: Poems
Jesse Graves
Texas Review Press, 2014



Graves' new collection is dedicated to four men his father admired, all of them from Sharps Chapel, Graves' hometown in Tennessee, and all of whom

"remembered rivers." The slightly mysterious dedication fits the tone of the poems. Divided into two sections, the first, "Toward the Call of the Owl," features a dream-like and slightly ominous opening poem, an invitation from the wild woods to a child to "step from behind that porch bannister." Another poem that notes this ambiguous appeal, "Fortune," contains the phrase that names that first section: "A man walks toward the call of the owl, not knowing what to believe/ about the sayings, the old song of the corpse-bird/crying out that his time is near at hand,/or that good fortune has found him, after all." Ghosts, of the narrator's brother, grandfather, grandmother, those "silvered transparencies," and his "night-owl" uncle, who left him the "memory of his memories," create an atmosphere that welcomes the glints of daylight and humor offered by poems such as "Once" and "Van Zandt Dream #4." The second section, "Not Yet a Nameless Dream," imagines the present as a future past; and several of the poems in this section contrast heroic history with the everyday history of life lived in a place. The subjects range a little wider geographically, including poems about New Orleans, and several focus as much on the intersection between the outside world and home as between past and future. Even more than in his earlier poems, the ordinary moments in *Basin Ghosts* are tinged with loss, remembered and imminent.❖

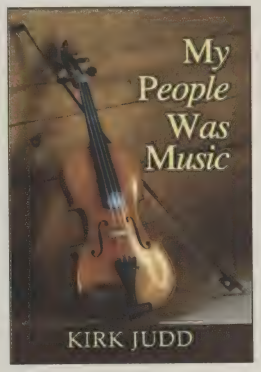
Honey from the Lion
Matthew Neil Null
University of North Carolina Outlook Books, 2015



After a first chapter that serves as prologue, Null's novel picks up with Coleman "Cur" Greathouse's hiring on with the Cheat River Paper and Pulp Company. Cur soon gets involved in a dangerous plan of sabotage to get the company to concede to demands for fair wages. Likeable and ordinary, he's a kind of Everyman, more or less innocently caught up in events around him. Among a large cast of intriguing characters are his two closest friends, opposites of each other and, each in his way, opposite of Cur. Bold, brash Vaughn McBride, a teamster, wearing an "epic and feathered hat" decorated with scrip, is a tall-tale come to life. Asa Neversummer, Cur's older friend, a lumberjack like Cur, is quiet and focused, committed to the success of the union cause.

Near the end of this dramatic story, Neversummer heads for southern West Virginia, where the mine wars are waging. This ambitious work of historical fiction is comparable to Mary Settle's *The Scapegoat* and reminiscent of Emile Zola's *Germinal*. It's a classic. In his acknowledgments at the close of the novel, Null thanks several historians for "making the vanished world real." His own tale is so redolent of the rough, outdoor life of a timber camp and boom town in the mountains of West Virginia in the early 1900s that his readers will no doubt thank him for the same.❖

My People Was Music
Kirk Judd
Mountain State Press, 2014



This collection combines Judd's poetic talent with the musical talent of Danny Arthur, the Bing brothers (Dave, Mike and Tim), Bob Shank, and "Pops" Walker, and the visual talent of photographer Dave Lambert. Judd and his friends have a long association that bespeaks the kind of community Appalachia lays justifiable claim to. The collection memorializes, celebrates, eulogizes, laments, and complains, all in musical cadences that skirt the border of speech and song. One element that makes it musical is Judd's natural and unpatronizing use of the vernacular dialect he's heard all his life. After listening to one or two poems on the CD, it's easy to hear his voice in the poems that

are printed on the page.

In commenting on Judd's poetry, Appalachian author Barbara Smith says he is "a people's poet," and it seems to me she's right. His poetry appeals to the same feelings that make people recite lines from poems they learned in school years ago. It has a compelling cadence and a populist sense of right and wrong and how things are in the world. It upholds loyalty to friends and family, and it understands the good luck of being in the midst of a landscape that feels alive with magical powers.❖

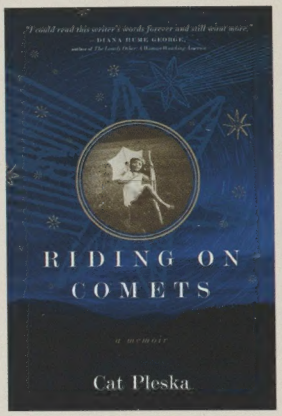
Walk Till the Dogs Get Mean: Meditations on the Forbidden in Contemporary Appalachia
Adrian Blevins and Karen Salyer McElmurray (Eds.)
Ohio University Press, 2015

WALK TILL THE DOGS GET MEAN
Meditations on the Forbidden from Contemporary Appalachia
Edited by Adrian Blevins and Karen Salyer McElmurray

Appalachian stars and newcomers populate this book of essays, poems, and a comic-book style story. All of them write about the untoward (and toward) effects of being Appalachian or, in some cases, "Halfalachian."

The thirty-two writers offer highly individual accounts of damage done and benefits reaped in their life-changing experiences in this region. Among the most striking are Chris Offutt's story of a lost boy; Jeff Mann's pushing the envelope, as always, describing desires that are outside the mainstream; Kathryn Stripling Byer's long poem, "Water Wants to Know"; and Mary Crockett Hill's wry take on how outsider and insider viewpoints serve each other. The book's diverse reflections, some knowing, some a little defensive, offer a fascinating cross-section of contemporary Appalachian authors' experiences in regard to their unothodoxy of gender, religion, race, or class in the region.❖

Riding on Comets: A Memoir
Catherine Pleska
West Virginia University Press, 2015



One of the most impressive achievements of Cat Pleska's *Riding on Comets* is the convincing recreation of her reactions as a child—taking as normal the chaos and upset around her. Her memoir is especially relevant these days, when more and more children are growing up in homes where drugs or alcohol makes disorder and violence the norm. Her story describes any number of factors that could sink a child's chances for happiness, but balancing those factors were parents and grandparents who weren't too damaged to grant her loving attention. The general outlines of her young life may be all too familiar to many children, but the details are intriguing and often funny. Her description of her grandfather and uncle getting into a fist fight is a highlight of the book, as are her portraits of her handsome, alcoholic father and her overwhelmed mother. A favorite anecdote is one where her father and grandfather are both so drunk that the father falls out the car door as the car rounds a mountain curve, and the grandfather doesn't notice. Like family stories most of us hear and tell, these stories from Pleska's childhood and youth are anecdotal and loosely organized. For the most part, they read as though they were being told on the porch—some scary, some funny, all worth the telling.❖

Eddy Pendarvis, guest book review editor for this issue, is the author of *Ghost Dance Poems*.

Life of a Dog

Scott Honeycutt

The ancient bitch snoozes by the fireplace as burning
gas logs round a halo behind her frumps and blousy sleep.
Cataract-filled eyes don't view orbs of light weaving
throughout her matted fur.
She's deaf now—and arthritic—so no long walks, no dog whistles,
nothing beyond her next meal.
Her nose won't let go: a mushy, black sponge.

We were there in her brief kingdom:
Remember the time that she ate the dead robin and pranced through
grass all morning with its legs extending out of her mouth like pencils?
That was over fifteen years ago.
The life of this dog is our life too.

For dinner, I place salmon and rolls in the oven—I'm twenty-seven;
I take them out—I'm twenty-nine.
I mow the yard in morning—I'm thirty, by tonight thirty-thirty three.
I watch loblollies bend under the wind—I'm forty,
but here again more of the same,
and that damn dog, alive through it all, licks calendar pages
and winds the clock with her tail.

Time moved through our dog years—
So never tell me that you expected she'd out live us,
that her teeth would rot like gummy, sweet fruit.
The firelight pulls at the drape that divides elapsed days,
and the puppy that you chose now whitens in our bones,
disappearing from the inside out.

Scott Honeycutt grew up in Virginia and Tennessee. He lives in Johnson City, Tennessee, where he is an Assistant Professor of English at East Tennessee State University.

Image purchased from Can Stock Photo

Coming in December: The Future of Appalachia

When a friend of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services suggested **The Future of Appalachia** as a possible theme, we immediately embraced his idea. Share your articles, essays, poems, and photographs as we ponder the region's future.

Accepting submissions beginning July 1, 2016
Closing submissions on August 31, 2016

East Tennessee State University
Center for Appalachian Studies and Services
Box 70556
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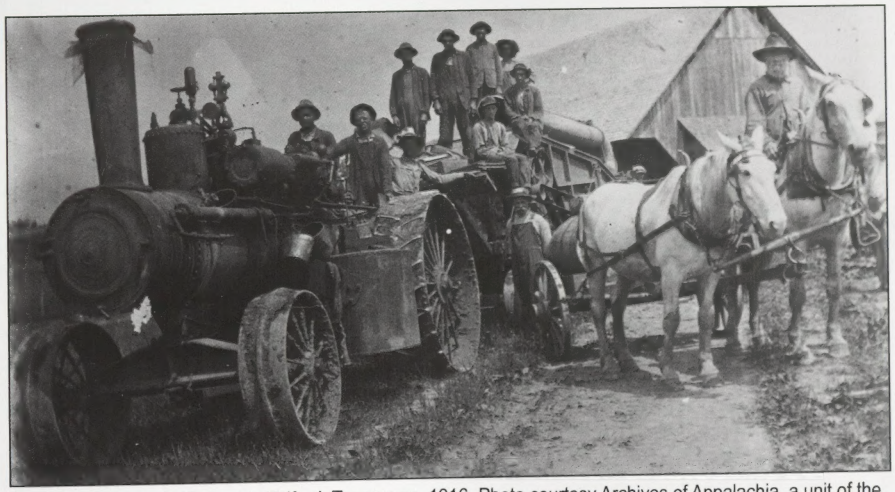

Steam engine, Mr. Self's farm in Telford, Tennessee, 1916. Photo courtesy Archives of Appalachia, a unit of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University, from the James Agee Film Project Photographs Collection (AppMs 471).

We think this photograph from one hundred years ago encapsulates both this issue's theme, "Cultivating Appalachia," and the theme of our next issue, "The Future of Appalachia."